

# REPORTS OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

## **Introduction**

The Council of Delegates of the CRCNA submits a *unified* report to synod composed of ministry updates provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The various reports here are presented in alphabetical order by agency, institution, or ministry name. Supplementary reports will be provided as well, if necessary, before synod meets.

Much of the material here supplies significant background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. The content also provides the transparency necessary to enhance our life together as a denomination.

Together these reports present the story of how God is blessing and guiding our work through the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church as we covenant together. As you read the material that follows, I encourage you to respond with gratitude for what God is doing through the Holy Spirit, transforming lives and communities worldwide, by means of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Zachary J. King  
General Secretary of the CRCNA



# Calvin Theological Seminary

## I. Introduction—Mission statement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this report to Synod 2026 with gratitude to God for his provision in the past year and for the past 150 years. The seminary has experienced God’s faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has been involved in the training, teaching, and formation of students for ministry for 150 years since 1876 and was the very first agency or institution developed by the Christian Reformed Church. For the past year, we have held special events and times of celebration as we give thanks for God’s faithfulness and for affirming the consistent and ongoing tie between church and seminary.

*Mission statement:* As a learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition that forms church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ, Calvin Theological Seminary exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church in North America and wider constituencies by preparing individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel.

## II. Response to Synod 2025

For the past few years, Calvin Theological Seminary has provided information concerning the ongoing confessional commitment of CTS. The following was provided in 2024 in the *Agenda for Synod 2024*.

### A Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary has been the seminary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Its teaching faculty have been interviewed and approved by synod, and its faculty have served the church in numerous capacities, including service as advisors to synod.

As CTS faculty committed to the Covenant for Officebearers, we profess the teachings of Scripture summarized by the Reformed confessions as interpreted by the decisions of synod. We commit to teaching, preaching, counseling, and writing within these covenantal bounds, whether in the classroom, church, or beyond.

We hold a variety of opinions and ideas on many matters, including past and possible future decisions of synod, and we are encouraged to express these views via official channels such as through overtures or communications from the congregations and classes to which we belong, through raising thoughtful questions for the church to ponder in future deliberations, or through theological conversations as a faculty, with the understanding that such communications will not undermine our good standing with one another as faculty.

CTS Faculty Minute #9354: The faculty reviewed and discussed the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitments by the CTS Faculty.” A motion was made and seconded to approve the Statement and share it with the Board of Trustees for information.

*Adopted.*

At the CTS Board of Trustees meeting on October 27, 2023, the board again reviewed and approved the above statement. The board then proceeded to adopt the statement as its own and directed that this statement should be included in its Calvin Theological Seminary report to Synod 2024.

We believe that these actions and this statement are in keeping with the request to clarify the ongoing confessional commitment of both the CTS faculty and the CTS Board of Trustees.

*(Agenda for Synod 2024, p. 226)*

That belief was affirmed by Synod 2024 when it adopted the following in plenary session:

That synod take note of the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty” from the Calvin Theological Seminary report (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 226) serving as a good faith response to the deferred instruction of the 2023 Advisory Committee 8E report (majority), C, 11.

*(Acts of Synod 2024, p. 809)*

*A. Additional information requested*

Synod 2025 requested additional information as noted in the following instruction:

That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to provide information to Synod 2026 as to the adherence of all instructional personnel to the CRC’s teachings, especially the creeds and confessions.

*Ground:* We appreciate the commitment of regularly appointed teaching faculty to teach, preach, counsel, and write within the covenant bounds of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 133), and desire to learn more about how this also extends to the category of those serving in other teaching roles at CTS.

*(Acts of Synod 2025, pp. 691-92)*

*B. Our respectful response to the instruction of Synod 2025*

Prior to Synod 2025, the faculty and the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary were already working on adding additional policies to continue to align and clearly identify our adherence to the creeds and confessions by regularly appointed faculty.

This material was approved by the CTS Board of Trustees in May 2025 and has recently been affirmed and amended by the CTS Board of Trustees at its latest board meeting on February 23, 2026.

The final current version of our Faculty Handbook at section 1.2 reads as follows:

### **1.2. Requirements for Seminary Faculty**

Faculty members at Calvin Theological Seminary must be committed to the Lord and to the ministry of the church. Ordinarily, faculty will be ordained within the Christian Reformed Church and have pastoral experience. Whether or not ordained, all CTS faculty must possess the character, wisdom, and many of the skills required of those who are ordained ministers of the Word. They must be sound in doctrine and zealous in propagating and defending Reformed Christianity.

All regularly appointed instructional personnel (full or reduced load), the president, chief academic officer, director of vocational formation, dean of students, dean of international student and scholar services, the director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching, academic program directors, as well as those the Board of Trustees shall from time to time designate for inclusion for this requirement, should be or become professing members of a Christian Reformed Church congregation and shall be required to sign the Covenant for Office-bearers.

When an incoming person for a position in those identified roles above begins their employment at Calvin Theological Seminary, they would identify a local Christian Reformed congregation as their congregation within two years of beginning their employment at Calvin Theological Seminary.

If the local congregation of persons in those identified roles referenced above becomes disaffiliated from the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), this person will move their membership to another local congregation within the CRCNA within a two-year period from when their current congregation has disaffiliated from the CRCNA.

In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Trustees may grant an exception to this requirement.

Persons identified in the roles referenced above shall include the identification of their local congregation in the yearly reports that they currently provide to the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.

At the same CTS Board of Trustees meeting of February 23, 2026, the board approved the following requirements for auxiliary teaching personnel, which includes all adjunct faculty.

Auxiliary Instructional Personnel Definition – Calvin Theological Seminary currently identifies adjuncts as well as faculty mentors in the Competency Based Theological Education (CBTE) programs and those who are formation mentors serving through the ministry of the Vocational Formation Office (VFO) as auxiliary instructional personnel. This does not include one-time or occasional guests to classes invited in by the teacher of record.

Auxiliary instructional personnel are asked to provide signature acceptance that they will adhere to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and our confessions.

*Sample of Contract Language*

We are glad that you are interested in serving Calvin Theological Seminary students. We appreciate your desire to be an instructor in this learning institution. Calvin Theological Seminary was formed in 1876 by the Christian Reformed Church, and we continue to be shaped and formed by this church denomination which continues to provide prayers, support, encouragement, and oversight (through trustees) for our work in serving the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the wider church.

As a result, we ask that you be familiar with and respect the Christian Reformed Church in North America and her constituencies. Over time, the Christian Reformed Church has stated its position on a variety of contemporary topics.

The following are summaries of the denomination's doctrinal and ethical positions as stated over the years by synod:

- [crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements](http://crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements)

We would also note the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are as follows:

- [crcna.org/welcome/beliefs](http://crcna.org/welcome/beliefs)
- [crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions](http://crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions)

**Consistent with your agreement as auxiliary instructional personnel at CTS to respect and adhere\* to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and our confessions, we ask for your signature as a sign of your agreement to teach within those parameters.**

*\*Adhere means agreement in doctrine and life with the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions as interpreted by the synod of the CRCNA, including the CRCNA's understanding of a biblical theology of human sexuality.*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Exception Clause and Process:* If for some reason, you are not able to provide your signature for this indication of agreement, the Academic Office would ask for a statement of reason, which we will process with the President, the Faculty Status and Development Committee, and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of

Trustees as to whether Calvin Theological Seminary may grant an exception to your signing for your teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.

We (CTS) do greatly appreciate our ongoing foundational relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. We submit this material in the hope that our love and appreciation for this vital relationship and our common commitment to the creeds and confessions is recognized. As our Vision Frame states: “We are formed by and serve the church, God’s agent of hope for the world” ([calvinseminary.edu/about/#vision](http://calvinseminary.edu/about/#vision)).

### **III. Upcoming retirement of President Jul Medenblik**

President Jul Medenblik was affirmed as president-elect by Synod 2010 and began his ministry as president on July 1, 2011. In the fall of 2025, President Medenblik informed the CTS Board of Trustees of his intention to step out of his current role on June 30, 2027. The board gave thanks for the service and achievements of President Medenblik and has begun to form a search committee in keeping with the CTS Board of Trustees Handbook. They have also retained Rev. Dr. Ken Eriks as a professional service consultant in this season of transition.

We invite the denomination to join us in giving thanks for the ministry of President Jul Medenblik, who embodies what it means to be “called to serve” and to pray for the search process to lead us to the next president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

### **IV. Highlights from the past ministry year**

#### *A. Building and program updates*

##### **1. New Student Housing Unit**

October 30, 2025, marked a special time of “ribbon-cutting” for our new 46-apartment student housing project. As noted in prior reports, we are seeing more second-career students and students with children enroll at CTS. As a result, we plan to provide 20 three-bedroom, 19 two-bedroom, and 7 one-bedroom apartments. We are grateful for funding support for over 70 percent of the cost of completing this project. The location of this new building is next to our campus at 3300 Burton Street SE in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

##### **2. Remodeled facility, distance learning**

We continue to be grateful for our fully remodeled building facility featuring updated technology and collaborative learning spaces that serve residential students, online students, and students in “flex” learning situations, where both residential and online students meet in the same classroom.

We are grateful as well for the investment made many years ago in an online delivery system of education as we mark moving into a second decade of providing “distance” learning. More than ever, a Calvin Theological Seminary education is just a “click” away.

### *B. Enrollment*

Fall 2025 brought us 120 new students (an increase from Fall 2024, when we welcomed 76 entering students), and now CTS totals over 364 degree-seeking students in all programs, with auditors and nondegree students bringing the total census up to 412.

We wish to highlight that we experienced a significant increase of students from Canada in fall 2025. The fall 2024 enrollment numbered 33 Canadian students in our census. The fall 2025 census included 58 Canadian students.

This increase is largely a result of the ongoing efforts of our Canadian Church Relations liaison, Rev. Shawn Brix, in collaboration with the admissions office, as well as recently policy changes such as our “at-par” tuition initiative, whereby tuition for Canadian students is at par between Canadian and U.S. dollars. As a result, we have had more students inquiring about studying at CTS and finding that it is in reach on multiple levels, including financial support and through our online ministry programs. Rev. Shawn Brix is available for consultation and discernment for anyone making inquiries about CTS. He can be contacted at [sbrix@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:sbrix@calvinseminary.edu).

### *C. New staff*

Calvin Theological Seminary has been blessed by a number of incoming staff members who have felt called to serve our community:

Rev. David Beelen, who served for many years as pastor of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and retired in 2020, stepped in this past academic year and has committed to serve through the next academic year as director of vocational formation. Pastor Dave brings a stellar reputation of mentoring students, and he will focus on mentoring mentors and finding appropriate internship sites for students as he joins others in the Vocational Formation Office to serve our students and the church.

Ms. Holly Small is joining us as associate director of admissions. She brings a great deal of church and denominational experience to this role.

We look forward to the beginning of the teaching ministry of Dr. Jessica Joustra and Dr. Jared Michelson, who were interviewed and approved by Synod 2025. They take up positions this summer in the area of systematic theology.

Please join us in welcoming these and other new staff and faculty who are “called to serve.”

### *D. New master of arts degree program*

Calvin Theological Seminary’s new master of arts in clinical mental health counseling (MCMHC) launched in fall 2023. This professional and theologically grounded degree offers coursework in religious and theological foundations, clinical counseling, and clinical practice. Graduates of the program could consider using their knowledge and gifts by serving in clinical mental

health therapy, clinical mental health counseling, addiction counseling, behavior counseling, or other mental health roles. We are currently in a search for a new director following the move of Dr. Danjuma Gibson to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in summer 2025.

#### *E. Curriculum revision*

CTS recently completed its master of arts and master of divinity curriculum revision. The revision has identified outcomes aligned with the understanding that Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to form graduates who will discern, together with those they serve, answers to the following questions:

- What is our ministry CONTEXT?
- How does the GOSPEL engage our context?
- What is God CALLING us to in this context?
- What is the PERSON and role of a servant leader in this context?

These program goals are intimately and necessarily connected because every ministry situation occurs in a particular CONTEXT where the GOSPEL of God's redemptive activity is communicated, where God is CALLING people to participate in his mission, and where God is forming the PERSON and role of a servant leader.

#### *F. Strategic plan*

In May 2024 the CTS Board of Trustees approved a strategic plan and set out goals to help guide us into the next 150 years of service to the church. We distill this plan into four major themes:

- *Compelling invitation*—We focus intentionally on our Reformed heritage and identity not only through scholarship but also in student formation and societal engagement. We want to share our distinctiveness in bold, creative, and clear ways that are compellingly invitational and winsome.
- *Holistic learning journeys*—We focus on serving students, ensuring the best learning experiences and mentorships by not only equipping staff and faculty appropriately and adequately but also meeting student expectations for contextual curriculum and multifaceted learning opportunities.
- *Organizational excellence*—We foster an ethos of organizational excellence where trust, accountability, respect, and mutuality around a shared vision are embodied, where individual and collective contributions are valued and celebrated, and where everyone who comes into contact with CTS will experience purpose, fulfillment, care, and ultimately a communal experience of our unity in Christ.
- *Cultivating abundance*—With gratitude to God for his providence, we are encouraged by and appreciate a community of generous supporters through whom our student body will continue to grow and expand, and through whom the mission of CTS is realized. We will promote this missional invitation to ensure a solid fiscal base for the

ongoing work of Reformed theological education, formation, and scholarship.

#### *G. The Forum platform*

As a tool by which to meet the goals of the strategic plan, we recently developed and launched The Forum platform ([theforum.calvinseminary.edu](http://theforum.calvinseminary.edu)), a website that serves as the intersection of faith, culture, and Scripture. With this platform the seminary continues to respond to the needs of the global church, upholding the authority of Scripture, the centrality of Christ in the world's story, and the world's desperate need for God's grace. We seek to serve the church by building on the foundation of *The Forum* magazine. We invite responses and reflections from all who pursue their call while wrestling with the enduring questions of mercy, justice, faith, and formation.

CTS plans to continue publishing *The Forum* magazine in print and digital formats. On The Forum platform we'll provide additional content from our partners that includes video teaching series, event invitations, free webinars, and opportunities to attend retreats. The platform is for people working in church ministry, seeking to live out their faith in their daily life, pursuing answers to vexing questions, or simply pursuing a deeper knowledge of God.

### **V. Reflecting on Our Calling**

Over the past number of years, the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty, with input and final approval from the seminary's Board of Trustees, produced a "Vision Frame" document that includes our mission statement (*What* are we doing?) and continues as follows:

*Values*—Why are we doing it?

- *Reformed theology*—All our teaching and formation grow from a shared understanding of God's Word as articulated in the Reformed confessions.
- *The church*—We are formed by and serve the church, God's agent of hope for the world.
- *Cultural context*—We give our students tools to sow the gospel in a multicultural world. We challenge one another to have hearts that engage the broader world God so loves.
- *The whole person*—We cultivate meaningful relationships with our students to foster personal and spiritual growth throughout our learning community.

*Strategy*—How are we doing it?

Through the power of the Holy Spirit,

- we are known for academic excellence and scholarship.
- we provide innovative learning environments.
- we pursue synergy with our graduates and other ministry leaders.
- we nurture a community of hospitality.
- we enrich the student experience through vital partnership.

*Measures*—When are we successful?

When graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary

- preach and teach the Bible (*message*).
- grow in their pastoral identity (*person*).
- discern and engage ministry contexts (*context*).
- cultivate and lead communities of disciples (*goal*).
- equip the church to renew communities for the glory of God (*purpose*).

A scan of this material shows significant convergence with the ministry priorities of the Christian Reformed Church in North America:

*Faith Formation*—Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to train disciples who become the trainers of disciples of Jesus Christ.

*Servant Leadership*—Calvin Theological Seminary is seeking to identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God. From resident and online education programs followed by continuing education programs and resources, Calvin Theological Seminary is training leaders.

*Global Mission*—the world is at our doorstep. Every year around 25 different nations are represented in the student body of Calvin Theological Seminary. (This past year nearly 40 percent of our degree-seeking students came from outside the U.S. and Canada.) The training for global mission takes place not just in classrooms but also over lunch in the Student Center.

*Mercy and Justice*—Calvin Theological Seminary trains students through cross-cultural internships and exposure to environments that help form the hearts of Christian disciples. For example, experience with prison ministry through Calvin Theological Seminary has led students to witness the need for ministry to prisoners and to understand the structures of society that need to be addressed.

*Gospel Proclamation and Worship*—Along with the priority of Servant Leadership this is probably our leading edge within the CRC ministry priorities. Our core degree is the master of divinity (M.Div.) degree, which helps to form preachers and teachers of the gospel.

## **VI. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey* (Ministry Plan)**

### *A. Vocational Formation Office update*

Making and maintaining connections with churches is a foundational component of education for Calvin Theological Seminary. Whether this involves church-based internships or assignments related to the local church environment, the local church is the key partner for nurturing, developing, and training students.

In fall 2017, Calvin Theological Seminary set up a new way for M.A. and M.Div. students to fulfill a significant part of their contextual learning requirements. From early on in their program, students are placed in a church or ministry organization where they serve for two years, concurrent with

their course work, through internship hours coordinated with churches during the ministry year. The Office of Vocational Formation—led by director Dave Beelen, associate director Jessica Rowland, and administrative coordinators Jennifer DeJong and Jennifer Greer—continues to develop partnerships that help bridge the classroom and the church. The following organizations and churches are part of this concurrent, contextual learning approach:

African Community Fellowship Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Beaverdam CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan  
Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, Michigan  
Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Christ Memorial Church, Holland, Michigan  
Covenant PCA, Holland, Michigan  
East Leonard CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Ebenezer CRC, Leduc County, Alberta  
First Byron CRC, Byron Center, Michigan  
First CRC of Oostburg, Wisconsin  
First Christian Reformed Church of Bellflower, California  
Gateway Community Church, Merced, California  
Georgetown CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan  
Grace CRC, Chatham, Ontario  
In Spirit Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Jennings Creek CRC, Lindsay, Ontario  
Korean Grace Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Korean Presbyterian Church of Metro Detroit, Michigan  
Living Hope Community Church, Fox Lake, Wisconsin  
Living Water CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Lucknow Community CRC, Lucknow, Ontario  
Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Madison Square CRC: North Campus, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
New Life Fellowship CRC, Red Deer, Alberta  
Noordeloos CRC, Holland, Michigan  
Pella Regional Health Center, Pella, Iowa  
River Rock Church, Rockford, Michigan  
Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Sunlight Community Church, Port St. Lucie, Florida  
Visalia CRC, Visalia, California  
Walker URC, Walker, Michigan  
Wayland CRC, Wayland, Michigan

Because internship hours may now occur during concurrent internships throughout the academic year, we have opened a new way of connecting students to churches for summer service. We appreciate the churches and

organizations that have served as “additional” places of formation, including these cross-cultural and international sites:

- F Street Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Africa Inland Church Ongata Rongai, Nairobi, Kenya
- CMT Guatemala, Guatemala
- Heartland Hospice, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- National Evangelical Church, Bahrain
- Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services (Clinical Pastoral Education),  
Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Resonate Global Mission, India
- St. Lucie County Jail, Fort Pierce, Florida
- St. Thomas Reformed Church, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Currently, ten of our fourteen formation groups are led by seminary faculty/administration members, and four are led by pastors. Formation group leaders include Sam Ha, Jeff Lash, Jeff Fisher, Wendy Fisher, Aleah Marsden, Matthew Wright, Jennifer Greer, Jennifer McCormick-Bridgewater, Scott De Young, Lisa Hoogeboom, Denise Posie, Sarah Chun, David Rylaarsdam, Aaron Vriesman, Layne Kilbreath, and Dave Beelen.

We appreciate the support of the church and alumni for their encouragement to expand our offerings for academic and ministry leadership for local churches and the global church.

We also continue to welcome the opportunity to connect our students with churches in need of summer ministry leadership as a result of pastoral vacancies, sabbaticals, and new ministry initiatives. Please contact the Vocational Formation Office for more information about this process ([vocationalformation@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:vocationalformation@calvinseminary.edu) or [calvinseminary.edu/church-resources](http://calvinseminary.edu/church-resources)).

#### *B. Center for Excellence in Preaching*

Now in its twenty-second year of service and ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary’s Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) continues to strive to achieve its original mission: to give preachers the resources they need to create and deliver fresh, compelling, and vibrant sermons from God’s Word. The CEP strives to spark every pastor’s creativity in engaging God’s Word, inspiring them to produce lively sermons of power and beauty.

Our website ([cepreaching.org](http://cepreaching.org)) continues to serve about 75,000 users every month from almost every nation in the world. Our sermon commentary resources, now available in English, Spanish, and Korean, serve pastors, Bible teachers, Bible study leaders, and others with ideas and insights into hundreds of biblical passages. In addition to new sermon commentary articles that appear every Monday morning, our sermon commentary library is searchable so that pastors and others can quickly find their way to the array of resources hosted on the website. These include audio/podcast sermons,

whole sample sermon manuscripts, a welter of sermon-illustration ideas, and preaching connections that include quotes and images from novels, biographies, movies, television shows, church history, and more. The site includes written work by director Scott Hoezee as well as Doug Bratt, Leopoldo Cervantes Ortiz, Lora Copley, Chelsey Harmon, Meg Jenista, John Lee, Stanley Mast, Al Postma, John Rottman, and Neal Plantinga.

Continuing education events remain a staple for the CEP, including week-long seminars for 15-20 pastors during the summer months. In July 2025 former seminary president Neal Plantinga and CEP director Scott Hoezee led a weeklong retreat on the topic “Preaching the Kingdom of God.” The seminar was highly ecumenical, and one of the five morning sessions was led by Dr. Danny Daley of CTS, whose work on the Beatitudes became a rich resource for the participants.

In 2025 the CEP completed its third year in a \$1.25 million five-year grant program as part of Lilly Endowment Inc.’s “Compelling Preaching Initiative.” The first year of the program was aimed at English-speaking pastors, and since January 2024 under the leadership of Latino Ministries director Gabriela Tijerina-Pike, the grant program has included Spanish-speaking pastors. Both parts of the grant program focus on Peer Learning Groups.

Additionally, in April 2025 as part of the Compelling Preaching Initiative, the CEP hosted a gathering of about a dozen current Peer Learning Group leaders for conversations at the Prince Conference Center on the Calvin University campus. The colloquy met for a day and a half and generated rich conversations on what the participants were learning from their respective Peer Learning Groups. Participants also shared many insights that members of their groups had brought forward on the various topics assigned through the CPI Lilly grant program. Time was also devoted to generating ideas for future Peer Group topics, and artificial intelligence came up as one of the most important themes to study in 2026.

The CEP continues to support major conferences and on-campus events. This includes the annual Symposium on Worship on the Calvin University campus in partnership with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. In February 2025 just over 800 people attended the event, where they heard sermons at the five main worship services based five of Jesus’ parables that are unique to the Gospel of Luke. As Symposium took a one-year hiatus in 2026, the CEP will be cosponsoring the upcoming Psalms Festival as part of Calvin’s 150th anniversary year. The CEP also supports the biennial Festival of Faith and Writing on the Calvin campus, and the next festival will take place in April 2026. CEP director Hoezee continues to serve as chair of the Calvin Center for Faith and Writing’s advisory committee.

As it continues its twenty-second year, the Center for Excellence in Preaching remains grateful to God for the grace he has given to this educational ministry and outreach. We remain grateful to our wonderful donors who

continue to underwrite the primary work of the CEP, and to Lilly Endowment Inc., which has opened new avenues of work in the Compelling Preaching Initiative. We remain grateful also for the support of the Christian Reformed Church.

*C. Lilly “Pathways for Tomorrow—Next Steps” initiative*

The “Next Steps” initiative at Calvin Theological Seminary consists of three programs designed to equip and support adult learning, particularly Latino/a pastors, commissioned pastors, and ministry leaders, by providing accessible and flexible theological education. Our overarching goal is to support the lifelong learning and formation of ministry leaders while they navigate their callings.

Through our Empower program, students can earn a certificate or a master of arts degree in a competency-based format. With the support of a mentor team, students complete a customized learning process in which they develop and demonstrate competencies for ministry. This flexible format is ideally suited to supporting the contextualized learning needs and goals of commissioned pastors across the CRCNA. CTS is actively seeking partnerships with classes to support the learning and credentialing of commissioned pastors.

The Empower program is designed to make ministry training more collaborative, flexible, integrated, and accessible. During our pilot phase, enrollment was initially limited to students participating through contextualized partnerships with the Grand Valley State University Campus Ministry (Grand Rapids, Mich.) and with Sunlight Community Church (Port St. Lucie, Fla.). In fact, this approach was highlighted at the recent Multiply Conference held at Sunlight Community, November 8-11, 2025. Students work with a CTS faculty mentor and two partner mentors to complete learning experiences that develop competence—head, hands, and heart—for ministry.

We have now developed a “standard path” as we move into making this competency-based theological education (CBTE) opportunity available to interested students. To learn more about CBTE as well as our new Lifelong Learning initiative, please contact associate director Wendy Fisher ([wfish222@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:wfish222@calvinseminary.edu)).

Additionally, we are expanding our nondegree lifelong learning offerings, including workshops, retreats, and cohort-based experiences. These offerings are designed to support ministry leaders in their biblical and theological learning, mental health, ongoing personal discipleship, and leadership growth.

*D. Lilly Endowment – “Thriving Congregations Initiative” grant*

Calvin seminary’s Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture received a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. in 2024 to help establish the “Ancient Practices for Missional Churches” initiative through 2028. The aim of the initiative is to encourage the flourishing of congregations, helping them

deepen their relationship with God, enhance their connections to each other, and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world. The “Executive Summary” in the grant proposal included the following remarks:

Calvin Theological Seminary has observed that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many churches are struggling because their rhythms of gathering and scattering have been disrupted, discipleship has become increasingly disembodied, and many people are feeling disconnected from or disenchanted with organized religion.

We see these challenges as opportunities to help congregants deepen their connection to God in the company of others, recenter the mission of the local church on the priesthood of all believers, and deepen their understanding of how their daily life and work connect to the mission of God.

To establish these pathways to congregational thriving, we want to implement an Ancient Practices for Missional Churches initiative that will directly engage ministry leaders and congregants. The initiative will center on four key activities:

1. Retreats focusing on spiritual formation: Pastors and ministry leaders will learn about the psalms and ancient Christian spiritual practices of formation and engage in experiential learning activities. Immersion in these spiritual formation riches of the Christian tradition will provide opportunities for innovation in their ministry context.
2. Seminars focusing on the priesthood of all believers: Congregations will learn a biblical/theological vision for the church centered on the priesthood of all believers, hear examples of historical and contemporary exemplars of this way of being the church on mission, and engage in practices of collaborating that cultivate and sustain this partnership between pastors and congregants.
3. Consultations: Seminary professors and staff will listen to the wisdom, challenges, and needs of pastors and churches. The focus of these consultations will be on ministries of the local church that connect with equipping the priesthood of believers, spiritual formation, and cultural analysis and engagement. In these consultations, participants will help us establish a research agenda and assist in compiling and creating best resources and practices for congregations.
4. Resource curation and creation: We will identify and synthesize leading theological and ministry frameworks for direct instruction in three areas: spiritual formation, the priesthood of all believers, and cultural understanding for flourishing. We will curate or create resources that offer an experiential approach to learning the habits, practices, and dispositions for each of the three areas.

We will also compile stories of historical and contemporary exemplars of each of the three areas.

All program activities will be facilitated by the Calvin Theological Seminary's Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture (IMCC), which has extensive experience in equipping pastors and ministry leaders, coaching and collaborating with pastors and staff to host workshops in their congregations, and curating and creating actionable ministry resources. The director of the IMCC is Dr. Cory Willson, who holds the Jake and Betsy Tuls Professor of Missiology, World Christianity, and Public Theology endowed chair at the seminary.

## **VII. Additional program and ministry highlights**

### *A. Faculty interviews and updates*

The Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and Board of Trustees anticipate presenting two candidates for interview and appointment at synod as new faculty members. We are in the final stages of a search for a professor of Old Testament as well as a professor for pastoral theology, care, and counseling. Please join us in prayer for these processes and for our candidates.

Dr. Ronald Feenstra, who began teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in 1992, will be retiring this summer. He is scheduled to present a "Last Lecture" on May 1, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., and this presentation will be available on livestream after the event. Please join us in giving thanks for his thirty-four years of faithful service.

### *B. Doctor of Ministry program*

The doctor of ministry program at CTS continues to develop with programming, coursework, and student research toward effective ministry praxis throughout a plurality of contexts. We have recently appointed Dr. Jeff Sajdak as Director of the D.Min. program.

For more information on the Doctor of Ministry program, please visit [calvinseminary.edu/program/doctor-of-ministry](http://calvinseminary.edu/program/doctor-of-ministry).

### *C. Calvin Prison Initiative in partnership with Calvin University*

On September 8, 2015, Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary were blessed to open prison doors by beginning classes at Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan, as part of the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI). Twenty new students from within the prison system came together to begin a five-year bachelor's degree program accredited through Calvin University.

Calvin Theological Seminary continues its partnership with Calvin University to financially support the Calvin Prison Initiative. Each year CTS raises around \$400,000 from donors to support this impactful program; Calvin University's role is to administer the program. Now in its eleventh year, CPI offers a heart-shaping, life-altering Christian liberal arts degree to men incarcerated at the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan.

Through this five-year program, men are earning a bachelor of arts degree with a double major: human services (similar to social work) and faith and community leadership. Currently 101 men are enrolled in the program. To date, 88 students have earned a bachelor of arts degree, and 18 more are set to graduate in May 2026. Of the 88 graduates, 14 have been paroled. One of those men is now studying at Calvin Theological Seminary toward a master in theological studies degree. He plans to earn a doctoral degree as well.

Each year CPI produces an Impact Report, accessible at this link: [simplebooklet.com/calvinprisoninitiativeimpactreport2025](http://simplebooklet.com/calvinprisoninitiativeimpactreport2025)

This year's report includes the stories of four CPI graduates who have been released or paroled. They share about the education they have received and how that is making an impact in their work outside of prison. Some of our partners at the Michigan Department of Corrections contribute to the report as well.

### **VIII. Administration**

The seminary administration includes Rev. Julius Medenblik, president; the Internal Chief Operations Officer Team of Daryl Boersma (IT), Randy DeVries (controller), and Karen DeYoung (HR); Dr. Yudha Thianto, chief academic officer; Scott DeYoung, director of academic services and registrar; Rev. David Beelen, director of vocational formation; Robert Knorr, director of development; Rev. Jeff Sajdak, dean of students; and Sarah Chun, dean of international students and scholar services.

### **IX. Faculty**

The seminary faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Though preparing students for various forms of ministry continues to be central to their work, members of the faculty also provide education and counsel to many local congregations and broader assemblies, preach regularly, publish scholarly books and articles, participate in significant conferences, and in various ways seek to stay attuned to developments in ministries in the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Christ worldwide.

### **X. Board of Trustees**

The board met in plenary session online in October 2025 and in plenary session in person and online in February 2026. The board plans to hold an in-person/online plenary session in May 2026.

The recently elected board officers are Hessel Kielstra, chair; John Lee, vice chair; and Derek Buikema, secretary.

Information about nominees for the CTS Board of Trustees will be presented in the Agenda Supplement, and CTS will make recommendations related to new and reappointed board members as part of its supplementary report to synod.

## **XI. Students—Fall 2025**

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics from fall 2025 indicate the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

### *A. Denominational affiliation*

Christian Reformed: 172 (42%)

Presbyterian: 73

RCA: 8

Other Reformed: 15

Pentecostal: 5

Other/None listed: 35

### *B. Geographical information*

U.S. students: 194 (47%)

Canadian students: 58 (13%)

Korean: 51 (11%)

Chile: 11 (2.4%)

Mexico: 16 (3.5%)

Nigeria: 6 (1.3%)

Chinese: 7 (1.5%)

Other: 69 (15%)

Total countries represented: 31 — Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Tanzania, Ukraine, United States, Venezuela

### *C. Student body*

Male students: 289 (70%)

Female students: 123 (30%)

### *D. Programs and students enrolled*

- M.Div.: 109
- Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy: 22
- M.A. (English): 63 (includes 46 students in M.A. in Missional Theology – MTC)
- M.A. (Spanish): 35
- M.T.S.: 19
- Th.M.: 30
- Ph.D.: 42
- D.Min.: 14
- Hybrid/Distance learning: 74 (this number does not reflect residential students who also take a hybrid/distance class)
- English Certificate: 8
- CBTE Certificate: 11
- Non-degree seeking: 5

Finally, we want to acknowledge and give thanks for ongoing, faithful support from the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination and from individuals, churches, and classes. We are blessed by this community that continues to care for and encourage us—board members, faculty, staff, and students.

## **XII. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Hessel Kielstra, chair, and Julius Medenblik, president, and any other CTS Board of Trustees members who are present when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod take note of and accept the response of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to Synod 2025's request for additional information about "the adherence of all instructional personnel to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and confessions" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 691-92).

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees  
Derek Buikema, secretary

# Calvin University

## I. A message from the president

Dear friends in the Christian Reformed Church:

In this sesquicentennial year of Calvin University (as well as Calvin Theological Seminary), we give thanks for God’s steadfast faithfulness—and for the covenantal partnership we share with you in this work. Calvin University exists to equip students as Christ’s agents of renewal, and the past year has offered fresh evidence that this mission remains both vibrant and urgently needed in our world.

We see daily reminders that creation is beautiful and yet broken; that human systems, relationships, and institutions are in need of repair; and that young adults are longing for truth, belonging, purpose, and hope. Calvin’s calling is to form graduates who can name the brokenness honestly, resist despair, and live with durable Christian hope—grounded in the gospel, shaped by the Reformed tradition, and prepared to serve the world with wisdom, courage, and love.

In 2025 we launched new academic programs, deepened local and global partnerships, strengthened student formation, and continued to lead in undergraduate teaching and scholarship. These are not ends in themselves; they are signs of a community that is learning to think deeply, act justly, worship faithfully, and participate joyfully in God’s renewing work.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence that the Lord who has sustained Calvin for 150 years will continue to guide us. Thank you for walking with us in this shared calling.

## II. Executive summary

### A. Overview

The 2025 calendar year accelerated momentum toward Calvin’s strategic goals and marked the beginning of our 150th-anniversary celebration. Calvin continued to demonstrate strengths in teaching excellence, robust Christian scholarship, and meaningful opportunities for students. *U.S. News & World Report* again ranked Calvin number 1 for undergraduate teaching in the Midwest U.S.; Calvin also rose in the “Most Innovative Schools” category and sustained a top-five overall regional ranking.

Calvin’s momentum from 2024 carried into 2025 in student outcomes and recognition, including a Carnegie Classification as a research institution, standout CPA pass rates, and above-average acceptance rates for graduates entering health-related graduate programs.

Amid all of these developments Calvin’s distinctive contribution remains clear: we pursue academic excellence through a Reformed Christian lens, forming graduates who understand that every square inch of life belongs to Christ and that every vocation can become a calling—an arena for service, justice, healing, and faithful presence.

## *B. Response to Synod 2025*

With continued appreciation for the partnership between Calvin University and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), the Board of Trustees of Calvin University presents this response to questions posed by Synod 2025.

Synod 2025 commended Calvin University for its “high-level majority of confessional alignment in the Board of Trustees” and encouraged the board “to continue the good work of two-tier application and consider a higher level than a simple majority of confessional alignment, and report back to Synod 2026” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613).

Synod also instructed “the Calvin University Board of Trustees to further define ‘indefinite exceptions’ to confessional subscription (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 156) and the reasons that these may be granted, and report back to Synod 2026” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613).

The board’s response to Synod 2026 follows:

The Board of Trustees reported to Synod 2025 that it would ensure “that the majority of trustees are convictionally aligned with synod’s confessional expectations while allowing for measured flexibility in trustee selection to maintain governance sustainability and effectiveness” (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 156). In that limited context, the word “majority” made that statement unclear; as stated elsewhere in the board’s special report to Synod 2025, trustees are required to affirm the three ecumenical creeds and subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity, thereby ensuring “not only alignment of conduct, but also alignment of conviction, with the distinctives of the Christian Reformed Church” (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 162).

Historically, like officebearers and in line with the Covenant for Officebearers, all trustees were permitted to submit a gravamen to express a difficulty with a confessional teaching. That is no longer the case. As already reported (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 164), the board requires unqualified convictional alignment for all Classis Region Trustees, and that is a majority of trustees (16 of 31). Whereas all trustees historically had access to the gravamen process, now only a minority (15 of 31) do; moreover, the preference of the board is to have all nonclassical trustees in full convictional alignment.

The board’s preference for nonclassical trustees to have convictional alignment could mean that no trustee has a confessional difficulty with some aspect of the Three Forms of Unity. Indeed, no trustee presented for appointment since Synod 2022 has expressed a confessional difficulty, and the vast majority of trustees are in full convictional alignment. The reason the board believes some flexibility is appropriate for nonclassical trustees has to do with the board’s fiduciary responsibilities related to mission, accreditation, financial sustainability, and academic integrity. In this way, the university is different from the local church: there may be skills and experiences needed of new trustees that warrant consideration of a candidate who has a settled conviction against an aspect of the Three Forms of Unity. Whether a

particular skill or experience is sufficiently in demand (i.e., not possessed by anyone else willing to serve) to grant an exception to the preference for full convictional alignment depends on the skill/experience, the composition of the board, and the nature of the confessional difficulty. Weighing a candidate's need for an exception to full convictional alignment is not a formulaic matter but one of prayerful discernment regarding the best interests of the university, including with reference to its partnership with the CRCNA.

The changes summarized above reflect that gravamina are less available than before and are likely to be rare. What remains unchanged is the "clear expectations of conduct aligned with full support for the CRCNA standards and synodical interpretations" (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 164) by all trustees (31 of 31).

Calvin University views full convictional alignment literally. A settled conviction against any confessional teaching is not allowed for classical trustees and would require the granting of a gravamen for nonclassical trustees, regardless of the teaching in question. Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism is no more or less confessional than, say, Lord's Day 26, or any article in the Canons of Dort.

In the rare event that a nonclassical trustee has a confessional difficulty with an aspect of the Three Forms of Unity, that difficulty must amount to more than a measure of discomfort or curiosity. It must be a disagreement that causes persistent serious doubt or a settled conviction against a teaching in the Three Forms of Unity ("Guidance on 'Affirming the Confessions,'" Oct. 1, 2025; [network.crcna.org/topic/leadership/crcna-and-synod/guidance-affirming-confessions](https://network.crcna.org/topic/leadership/crcna-and-synod/guidance-affirming-confessions)). To be accepted, if at all, a gravamen would need to be biblically and confessionally grounded, reflecting an uncompromising commitment to the Reformed Christian tradition (e.g., a trustee candidate who disagrees with the confessions about baptism might anchor such disagreement in biblical evidence supporting believer's baptism and demonstrate resonance with Reformed understandings of covenantal theology).

We believe our response above fulfills synod's requests.

Finally, we worked with the Office of General Secretary to develop a trustee nomination form that includes basic contact information, education and professional journey, skills and experience for board leadership and fiduciary governance, connections to Calvin University and its mission, faith journey and stated commitment to Jesus Christ, and a commitment to the creeds and confessional standards of the CRCNA.

### **III. State of the university**

#### *A. Enrollment growth*

Building on 2024 trends (largest incoming class in a decade), Calvin sustained interest and visibility in 2025 as a top-tier teaching institution with diverse programs and global reach. Calvin's 3,600 diverse students bring

strong representation across North America, internationally, and among first-generation university students.

In fall 2025, Calvin welcomed over 1,000 new students to campus for the third year in a row, a significant milestone reflecting sustained momentum amid a challenging higher-education landscape.

Since 2020, Calvin has seen applications rise by 78 percent, admissions by over 65 percent, and enrollment increase by 35 percent—trends driven by recruitment strategies, new financial-aid offerings, expanded campus visits, and a growing global footprint.

#### *B. Local and global engagement*

In 2025, Calvin's School of Graduate and Continuing Studies carried on its mission to provide high-quality, accessible, Christ-centered education for adult learners—refining and expanding pathways for graduate students, undergraduate degree completers, and professionals. Key highlights included the following:

- **Wayfinder:** A free humanities-credit program that moved on campus to strengthen belonging and expanded to a second cohort on the Handlon Correctional Facility campus (Ionia, Mich.), serving adults who face barriers to higher education—including those who have not had access to programming while incarcerated.
- **Professional development:** Noncredit microcredentials on mission-aligned topics, including Mental Health Ambassadors (with nursing faculty) and Cultural Values in Ministry (alongside the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship).
- **Degree completion:** Two new pilot pathways designed for working adults—one class at a time, one evening on campus each week—with transfer-friendly policies and credit for prior learning increasing future appeal.
- **Graduate programs:** Strategic program changes, including the retirement of several programs, investing in promising programs, and launching the master of social work program. Calvin also transitioned from a vendor partnership for graduate recruitment, enrollment, and advising to supporting this work with internal resources.
- **Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI):** One hundred students across five cohorts at Handlon Correctional Facility working toward a dual major in human services (similar to social work) and faith and community leadership, with the seventh cohort graduating in May; a new \$6,000 scholarship was established for Michigan Department of Corrections employees and their children.
- **Grant for community efforts:** A three-year, \$500,000 grant to support virtue formation through learning alongside community partners, emphasizing virtues such as empathy, justice, patience, humility, and curiosity through programs including community-based nursing, Plaster Creek Stewards, and Wayfinder.

## 1. Global engagement and scholarship abroad

Calvin's global scholarship and partnerships extended their academic and missional reach worldwide. Faculty contributed to international conferences and publications across disciplines, including research related to water stewardship, community health, and cross-cultural worship practices.

Key highlights included the following:

- **Umm al-Jimal Archaeological Partnership (Jordan):** Continued collaboration at an ancient site recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2024, including public lectures and ongoing digital documentation and community archaeology involving faculty and students.
- **International University Partnerships:** Ongoing memoranda of understanding with Christian universities in Indonesia, Honduras, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Korea, supporting faculty exchanges, joint research, and student opportunities.

## 2. Global alumni engagement and lifelong learning

Calvin's "Calvin on the Road" sesquicentennial program gathered alumni and friends at 35 events across 19 states, two Canadian provinces, and four additional countries during the 2025-2026 school year. The Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning (CALL) offered 76 courses, with 1,050 members including alumni and over 300 community members.

## 3. Off-campus programs

Calvin offered semester programs in Washington, D.C.; Peru; the United Kingdom; Spain; France; and Hungary; along with January and summer courses in more than fifteen countries—faculty-led, faith-infused experiences that prepare students to be wise and responsible participants in God's diverse world.

## 4. Community Engagement

Plaster Creek Stewards continued restoration, education, and youth Green Team programming across the local watershed. The Service-Learning Center hosted StreetFest in fall and spring, connecting students with service and learning at dozens of local nonprofits; the program received recognition through the Fountain Hill Center's Friends and Champion Award in December 2025. The Service-Learning Center also expanded partnerships and led spring-break trips to Georgia, Illinois, and North Carolina.

### *C. Finances*

Calvin continued disciplined resource management while advancing strategic priorities (academic innovation, student experience, facilities). Like many universities and colleges, Calvin navigated sector-wide financial challenges related to the higher-education enrollment cliff, changing legislation, market pressures, and more. The end of 2025 brought faculty reductions and program changes aimed at long-term sustainability and mission alignment.

## Advancement updates

During FY2024-2025, Calvin received \$27.7 million in total dollars and raised \$31.7 million overall, including \$3.06 million in Annual Fund support. The Named Scholarship Program surpassed a \$3.5 million goal by securing \$4.6 million in gifts, creating 32 new scholarships. In total, \$5.7 million was awarded to students, with 1,515 students receiving 1,634 individual awards.

Through the Strengthening Our Path Forward campaign, Calvin is pursuing strategic growth that strengthens enrollment, deepens investment in Christian liberal-arts education, and extends its reach in the broader community—supporting projects such as the Commons Union, athletic enhancements, and new developments in the School of Health.

In 2025, Calvin also received several significant gifts supporting core priorities, including a \$20 million grant from the Lilly Endowment for the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s Shalom Worship initiative, private donor funding for the university’s Nutrition Lab, and a new donor gift of \$2.5 million in Aerospace Engineering supporting a named professorship, student research, program development, and lab/equipment enhancements.

## IV. Student experience

### *A. Faith, worship, and church partnerships*

Campus Ministries, led by Pastor Mary Hulst, continues to be a driving force of evangelism and discipleship at Calvin. Local church engagement remains central through the church fair, communion partnerships, ministry partners on staff, service-learning partnerships, and more.

Campus Ministries leads LOFT, chapels, retreats, and campus-wide Bible studies. In fall 2025 the team began hosting weekly cereal bar and sermon chats. Following Chapel Team auditions, Campus Ministries added eleven new student members, expanding student leadership in worship. A new Faculty/Staff Advent service emerged in response to faculty-staff interest. In addition, Campus Ministries developed a system to support organic, student-led worship groups alongside worship through the Campus Ministries office.

Upcoming priorities include supporting the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s “Psalms 150: A Conference Experience” (Feb. 2026), planning the 150th Worship Service (Mar. 29, 2026), and hosting Calvin’s annual Day of Prayer (Mar. 2026).

### *B. Student opportunities and achievements*

The 2025 student experience was energized by Calvin’s sesquicentennial celebrations, including three major Celebration Weeks beginning with Homecoming and featuring music festivals, theater performances, and traditions such as Cokes & Clubs and Chaos Night—events that strengthened community and fostered belonging.

During UnLearn Week, Calvin hosted campus-wide forums and intentional conversations designed to challenge biases and promote biblical antiracism. Career development remained a priority through the Career Center's Career Connections programming, including employer meetups, skill-building workshops, and career fairs.

The Center for Counseling and Wellness continued individual and group therapy using a Stepped Care Model, offered a three-session workshop series for coping skills, and provided suicide prevention training each semester. Off-campus students could access a therapist-assisted online program at no cost. The wellness room and lightbox lending program remained popular.

Students achieved national distinction across disciplines, including top industry awards for advertising and design majors, exceptional CPA pass rates, above-average graduate school acceptance for pre-health students, and Calvin's Model UN team earning its first-ever "Best Delegation" award at a major Midwest conference. Students contributed meaningful research with public health and conservation implications, including identification of the longhorned tick in Michigan and discovery of rare mussel species in Plaster Creek. Three students were named Goldwater Scholars. Sustainability efforts included installing the largest on-campus solar project to date on the Facilities Building and partnering with the mayor of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to design a potential green revolving fund.

#### *C. Scholarship*

Calvin's faculty were honored across several fields in 2025, and Calvin continued to emphasize excellent undergraduate teaching, engineering strength (including a new aerospace concentration), and research recognition spanning the sciences and humanities. Faculty honors included recognition for nursing, engineering, philosophy, communication, and aerospace engineering.

#### *D. Arts*

The arts continued to flourish at Calvin in 2025. Highlights included fiction screenwriting in the Calvin Prison Initiative, leading to the production of three short films; the opening of the Spoelhof Student Gallery; a new visiting artist series in the Center Art Gallery; major music events including the Calvin Music Festival and Lessons & Carols; and a theater season featuring strong student participation and the return of musical theater as part of the 150th-anniversary celebration.

#### *E. Athletics*

Calvin University athletics experienced exceptional success across men's and women's sports in 2025, including conference championships, NCAA tournament appearances, and top performances in basketball, soccer, volleyball, football, and track and field. Calvin earned the 2024-2025 MIAA Women's All-Sports Award for the tenth time and placed second overall in

the Commissioner's Cup standings. Calvin's holistic development of student-athletes—national finishes, strong team GPAs, and Christian formation—remained a distinctive hallmark.

## **V. Board Matters**

### *A. Board officers*

Board officers for the 2025-2026 year are Perrin Rynders, chair; Carolyn Van Allen, vice chair; Gene Miyamoto, secretary; Dirk Pruis, finance.

### *B. Board membership*

#### 1. Nominations

The nominations for new trustees and requests for reappointments to a second term will be presented in the Agenda Supplement.

#### 2. New trustees

At its October 2025 meeting, the Calvin University Board of Trustees welcomed three new trustees confirmed by Synod 2025: Craig Lubben, Leslie Vande Griend, and Cathy Van Donselaar (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 719-20). In addition, the COD affirmed the board's interim appointment of Nancy Schoonmaker to fill a vacant position beginning in fall 2025, in keeping with the relevant provision of Calvin University's bylaws (*Deferred Agenda for Synods 2020-2021*, pp. 290-93, 337; *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 841). A recommendation that she serve a full term will appear in the Agenda Supplement.

## **VI. Recommendation**

That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the president, Greg Elzinga, and to the chair of the board, Perrin Rynders, when matters pertaining to education are discussed.

Calvin University  
Greg Elzinga, president

## Canadian Ministries

### I. Introduction

The CRCNA's Canadian ministry office provides a variety of services to help churches carry out their work. The ministry office provides administrative services as well as office space for various staff members who work in Canada for the CRCNA's binational agencies and support ministries. The ministry office is also home to the Centre for Public Dialogue, Indigenous Ministry, and Intercultural Ministry, which help churches in Canada to live out God's call for justice, reconciliation, and belonging.

### II. Canadian Administrative Services

The Canadian ministry office provides churches with practical resources and support to help them thrive in ministry and administration. Some examples include helping churches understand and support ministry shares, educational content on capital campaigns, benefits administration for pastors and church staff, administration for the Bridge App, management of the preauthorized remittance program, and regular consulting on church finance, administration, and human resources matters. These tools help churches operate smoothly.

The Bridge App continues to be a valuable resource for Canadian CRCs and their members, with over 130 churches and 14,000 registered users. The Bridge App is also noteworthy for helping churches process over \$18 million (CDN) per year in donations.

Through these services and resources, the CRC's Canadian ministry office aims to equip churches with information, tools, and support to strengthen their work and to help empower them in serving their communities effectively.

### III. Centre for Public Dialogue

Cindy Stover, justice mobilization program manager

#### A. Introduction

The Centre for Public Dialogue (CPD) is supported by three staff positions: the senior leader, the justice mobilization program manager, and the Canada communications coordinator. The CPD is also advised and supported by the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), made up of representatives from alternating classes across Canada. The CPD promotes a positive voice of Christian faith in Canadian public life that seeks justice, hope, and reconciliation, in political dialogue and active citizenship.

#### B. *Our Journey milestones (Ministry Plan)*

1. **Prayer and spiritual practices:** Workshops and resources on practicing justice and advocacy as spiritual disciplines have been promoted to churches across the country. *Do Justice* provides weekly prayers and twice-weekly blogs from diverse voices, and updated worship resources are made available via the website and the Network.

2. **Every generation:** Staff intentionally engage with multigenerational audiences. Workshops and programming are developed specifically for youth, and the justice mobilizer regularly visits youth groups, campus ministries, and Redeemer University and The King's University.
3. **Unity and diversity:** Resources are developed from an intersectional lens, and advocacy actions are developed based on prioritization of the voices of those with lived experience. The Centre for Public Dialogue is also mutually accountable to Intercultural Ministry and Indigenous Ministry, and their teams speak directly into our advocacy and educational work.
4. **Share the gospel:** Education and action based in biblical justice are truly good news to the people we advocate alongside, creating communities of shalom where all can flourish in this world that belongs to God.

### *C. Collaboration*

The Centre for Public Dialogue works hand-in-hand with Indigenous Ministry and Intercultural Ministry, collaborating as well with Thrive and World Renew Canada in the areas of climate and refugee justice. We collaborate on justice education with Diaconal Ministries Canada, and we are a member organization of KAIROS Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. We also have close relationships and share resources with Citizens for Public Justice and For the Love of Creation.

1. Direction and priorities moving forward:
  - a. **Listening sessions** occurred in 2025 to gather data on the historical assets of CPD/CCG in order to develop renewed vision for the future. The data has been compiled and will be processed to reinvigorate CPD/CCG in this changing political world.
    - 1) Legislative analysis and advocacy action continue in the areas of climate justice, refugee justice, Indigenous rights, and medical assistance in dying.
    - 2) A justice educational series is planned for 2026 with Thrive and World Renew.
  - b. **Prayer requests:** For gracious engagement in an increasingly polarized world; for just government policy to be enacted that will bring shalom for all people in our communities, especially those who are most vulnerable; for true repentance and a desire for reconciliation where harm has occurred; and for God's healing to repair relationships.

## **IV. Indigenous Ministry**

Adrian Jacobs, senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation

### *A. Introduction*

Indigenous Ministry (IM) consists of a senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation and supporting staff: the justice mobilizer program manager and the Canada communications coordinator. The Canadian Indigenous Ministries Committee (CIMC) includes CRCNA and at-large members

from across Canada who are Indigenous and not Indigenous; it also includes the Urban Indigenous Ministries: the Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Indigenous Christian Fellowship in Regina, Saskatchewan; and the Edmonton Native Healing Centre in Edmonton, Alberta.

The CRC in Canada responds to the Survivors' Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action to the churches in Canada to educate themselves on the history of colonization, Indian Residential Schools, and its ongoing impact. The Kairos Blanket Exercise, Hearts Exchanged, and On-the-Land Learning events deliver impactful education.

#### *B. Our Journey milestones (Ministry Plan)*

1. **Prayer and spiritual practices:** Indigenous ministry resources include liturgies and prayers with a focus on Indigenous Ministry Sunday/National Indigenous Peoples Day in June and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.
2. **Every generation:** Indigenous elders, CRC parents, and youth engage in the Kairos Blanket Exercise, Hearts Exchanged, and On-the-Land Learning.
3. **Unity and diversity:** The senior leader fosters engagement with local Indigenous communities in CRC churches, Christian schools, and community groups.
4. **Share the gospel:** The gospel of Jesus features clearly in the educational work and publications of Indigenous Ministry.

#### *C. Collaboration*

CIMC and the senior leader collaborate in the CRCNA Canadian Justice Ministries and with Diaconal Ministries Canada. We continue to work with CRC churches and CRC-related ministries. We do presentations in Christian schools, collaborate in ecumenical settings, and contribute to non-church entities with our Indigenous education.

1. **Organizational summary:** We have very skilled and educated CIMC members who volunteer in shaping Indigenous Ministry resources. The directors of the Urban Indigenous Ministries, including the new director of Indigenous Christian Fellowship, are valuable contributors.
2. **Prayer requests:** For increasing impact in On-the-Land Learning initiatives that connect CRC church members to their local Indigenous community for practical reconciliation; and for effective CIMC communications on Indigenous Ministry to their home churches and classes.

## **V. Intercultural Ministry**

Jeremiah Bašurić and Sebastian Maldonado, senior coleaders of intercultural ministry

### *A. Introduction*

Intercultural Ministry consists of two senior coleaders and supporting staff: the justice mobilizer program manager and the Canada communications coordinator. The Intercultural Ministry Collective (IMC) includes CRCNA

members from across Canada. The CRC's Intercultural Ministry in Canada seeks to form a holistic and reforming body of Christ where people from diverse ethnocultural and racial backgrounds experience belonging, unity, and flourishing through intercultural engagement.

*B. Our Journey milestones (Ministry Plan)*

In the past year Intercultural Ministry has focused on walking alongside churches as they move from conversation to practice in intercultural ministry. This includes leading intercultural cohorts, developing an intercultural adaptation of Hearts Exchanged, and providing direct support to churches across Canada.

1. **Prayer and spiritual practices:** The Intercultural Cohort centered on prayer and worship as lived intercultural practices. Churches gathered regularly to reflect on their journeys, seeing worship as a shared spiritual practice that forms hospitable and inclusive communities.
2. **Every generation:** The cohort model created space for leaders and members across generations to listen, learn, and reflect together, helping to shape a space that speaks across generations and cultures.
3. **Unity and diversity:** Churches grew in confidence as they engaged with questions of diversity, hospitality, and inclusion in worship, leadership, and community life. We supported these communities through workshops, conversations, and shared resources.
4. **Share the gospel:** Through our intercultural initiatives, churches moved from conversation toward practice, learning how intercultural ministry strengthens their witness in local contexts. This equipped them to build relationships and share the gospel with humility and care.

*C. Direction and priorities moving forward*

We will continue helping churches connect intercultural ministry with their mission and witness by supporting them as they live out the gospel through welcome, hospitality, and relationship-building in their neighborhoods and communities. This includes ongoing support for churches outside formal cohorts while inviting them into deeper, sustained engagement. Completing and piloting the intercultural adaptation of Hearts Exchanged and continuing to offer cohort-like spaces remains a key priority, with continued emphasis on unity, lived experience, cultural awareness, and intercultural worship practices.

**VI. Finance**

All activities were completed within the approved ministry budget. Cohort-related activities were supported through a grant provided by Thrive.

# Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

## I. Introduction

The CRC Loan Fund empowers churches to grow by providing low-interest loans for capital improvements. Loans are funded through equity, donations, and investment certificates, which are currently offered in 23 states. Operational costs are covered by loan-interest revenue, and any surplus is reinvested to maintain lower loan rates for our borrowers.

## II. Financial operations

(Note: The Loan Fund operates only in the United States, so all figures are in U.S. dollars.)

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025:

<i>Statement of Activities</i>		<i>Certificate Activity</i>	
Revenues	\$741,419	Issued	\$1,308,965
Expenses	<u>611,783</u>	Redeemed or disbursed	\$2,096,305
Change in Net Assets	\$129,636	Renewed	\$1,329,486

### *Loan Fund Financial Information Reflecting Operational Trends*

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Cash and equivalents	\$ 5,022,493	5,696,748	7,481,890
Loans Receivable	10,160,301	10,014,323	10,013,377
Total Assets	15,237,323	15,711,071	17,495,267
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Certificates and interest payable	\$ 8,827,696	9,465,733	11,544,800
Other Liabilities	34,653		
Total Liabilities	<u>8,862,349</u>	<u>9,465,733</u>	<u>11,544,800</u>
Net assets	6,374,974	6,245,338	5,950,467

Despite fluctuations in lending and investments, the Loan Fund remained financially strong in FY 2025, with steady growth in net assets and continued support for churches.

- **Loans:** Lending volume has varied over the past three years. In FY 2025, we closed two loans totaling \$1.26 million (MI; WA), compared to one loan of \$767,000 (MI) in FY 2024 and four loans totaling \$2.75 million in FY 2023 (AZ; CO; FL; MI).
- **Investments:** We raised our investment certificate rates in FY 2025, and the decline in investments has slowed. Certificates decreased by \$550,000 (from \$9.38 million to \$8.83 million)—a much smaller decline than FY 2024’s \$2.12 million drop (from \$11.50 million to \$9.38 million).

- **Assets:** Total assets were \$15.2 million in FY 2025, down slightly from \$15.7 million in FY 2024, reflecting fewer loan originations and early paydowns. Net assets, however, grew from \$6.25 million in FY 2024 to \$6.37 million in FY 2025.

The Loan Fund maintains a loss reserve, with minimal losses over its more than 40 year history and zero in the past decade. Our audited financial statements as of June 30, 2025, can be found in the back of the Offering Circular available at [crcna.org/LoanFund/investment-certificates](http://crcna.org/LoanFund/investment-certificates).

### III. Highlights

Over the past year we have focused on rebuilding our lending activity because the Loan Fund’s portfolio has declined by nearly half over the past decade—from \$18.5 million in 2016 to \$10.22 million in 2025. To remain financially strong and mission-effective, we launched two key initiatives: (1) the First Church Building Loan Program and (2) expanded lending to CRCNA-related organizations. We are also in the process of developing a third initiative—a planned-giving program.

#### A. *The First Church Building Loan Program*

This program supports newer congregations seeking to purchase their first church home, an increasingly difficult step due to rising property and construction costs. Organized CRC congregations without a church building may obtain a secured loan at 1.5 percent below the Loan Fund’s current rate.

This initiative is significant for the following reasons:

- It catalyzes growth by providing important early-stage funding for churches seeking a permanent location. The loan is visible institutional support that builds credibility and can unlock additional resources like grants and donations.
- It advances CRCNA *Our Journey* milestones: *sharing the gospel* through planting and strengthening churches; and growth in *unity and diversity* by supporting a method whereby established Dutch-ethnic congregations can come alongside younger ethnic-minority churches and offer support by investing in or giving to the program.
- It builds on denominational community identity, drawing on the shared financial and relationship strength of the CRC community to foster sustainable, long-term ministry growth.

#### B. *Expanded lending to CRCNA-related organizations*

Under its founding documents, the Loan Fund was limited to lending to CRC churches. Lending to Christian schools and nonchurch ministries was explicitly excluded (clarified by Synod 1985). Loan demand has dropped significantly over the past decade, and church-related projects now often involve partnerships or require more capital than the Loan Fund’s \$1.5-million limit.

At Synod 2025, through a supplemental report, the Loan Fund requested authorization for the COD to review and approve an amendment to its Articles of Incorporation, with final ratification by Synod 2026.

In October, the COD approved (contingent on synod's ratification), an amendment to the Loan Fund's Articles of Incorporation, expanding lending eligibility to CRCNA-related organizations. The amendment has been adopted by the Loan Fund board, and we are promoting the opportunity; however, consistent with the COD's directive, we will not close any loans under the new authority before Synod 2026 ratifies the change.

Amended Purpose Statement (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund is organized exclusive-~~ly~~solely for the benefit of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), including~~and its affiliated member churches, and~~ boards, and agencies, as well as other organizations related to or connected with the CRCNA, such as schools. The its purposes of the corporation include, without limitation, providing financial assistance for-~~acting for the benefit of, and assisting in the financing of~~ capital improvements and other qualified purposes undertaken by such affili-~~ated or related entities. In furtherance of its purposes, the corporation is~~ authorized to~~for organized churches in such denomination and for churches organized and supported by the Board of Home Missions of such denomination; and further, shall include, without limitation, bor-~~rowing funds from, and to issue securities or other evidences of indebt-~~edness to,~~ financial institutions, individuals, churches, schools, agencies, and other entities that organizations created to support the mission of the CRCNA. ~~purposes of such denomination; and further shall include, without limitation, issuing securities and other evidences of indebtedness in order to acquire funds in furtherance of the corporation's purposes.~~

The Loan Fund now seeks synod's ratification of the amended Articles of Incorporation, enabling it to support a broader range of CRCNA-connected ministries and to strengthen the Loan Fund's financial capacity.

#### *C. Planned-giving program*

The Loan Fund has kicked off the process of developing a planned-giving program. Its investor population is aging, and our overall investment portfolio is on the decline. Establishing a planned-giving program will allow long-term investors to leave a legacy for future churches, providing the Loan Fund with the equity to offer lower loan rates, which could support the next generation of churches to establish permanency in their community.

#### **IV. Staff and board matters**

The Loan Fund is staffed by Layla Kuhl, director, and Alice Damsteegt, program coordinator. In the past year, the Loan Fund board participated in the

review of rubrics for considering nominations of board members (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76); the approved document can be found in the Agenda Supplement. The Loan Fund board is also requesting the reappointment of two members to additional terms.

**V. Recommendations**

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund director, Layla Kuhl, or board members, if present, when discussing matters related to the Loan Fund.
- B. That synod ratify the amendment to the CRC Loan Fund’s Articles of Incorporation.
- C. That synod, by way of the ballot, reappoint Dale Burghgraef and Wayne Postma to subsequent terms on the Loan Fund board as indicated in the Agenda Supplement.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.  
Layla Kuhl, director

## **Pensions and Insurance**

### **I. Introduction**

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

CEB Services is the third-party administrator for the Ministers Pension Plan and the denominational 403(b)(9) Retirement Plan.

The Pension Fund was established in its current form by Synod 1939, with significant revisions to the plan adopted in 1969 (*Acts of Synod 1939*, pp. 21-22; *Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 46-48) and later synods as well. The fund operates under a mandate to “maintain a Pension Fund and a Relief Fund from which emeritated ministers, widows, and orphans of ministers shall receive aid” in accordance with synodical regulations. This is in keeping with the expectation that the churches “provide honorably” for the support of retired ministers and qualifying dependents (Church Order, Art. 18-b; see *Agenda for Synod 1939*, Part II, p. 94).

### **II. Reflecting on Our Calling**

The Ministers Pension Plan and the benefit insurance provisions of the CRCNA are an extension of our commitment to Servant Leadership, in which we aim to equip leaders so that they can be prepared in their roles of growing and developing the CRCNA’s churches and ministries. We acknowledge that taking care of those who serve the CRCNA, by making provisions for their health and well-being and by providing a foundation for their retirement needs, allows them to focus their efforts on the callings entrusted to them.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey (Ministry Plan)***

Although the pension and benefits programs are not directly tied to our Ministry Plan, they take into account the diverse needs of our employees and their dependents, recognizing that caring for one is part of caring for the whole. The plans described here are practical and tangible services and benefits offered on behalf of CRCNA pastors and staff.

### **IV. Board matters**

The CRCNA ministers pension plans, special-assistance funds, and 403(b)(9) plans are governed by the U.S. Pension Trustees and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint sessions. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed. U.S. Pension Trustees for 2025-2026 are Lloyd Bierma, Luke Kloosterman, Darrel Raih, Drew Sweetman (chair), and Alan Van Dyke. Canadian Pension Trustees for 2025-2026 are Janet Baird, Daryl DeKlerk (chair), Hessel Kielstra, Jack Vanden Pol, and Dick Vreugdenhil.

Lloyd Bierma will be concluding service on the U.S. Pension Trustees board June 30, 2026. A nominee will be presented in the Agenda Supplement.

In keeping with the instruction of synod (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76), the pension trustee boards reviewed their rubrics for board membership and forwarded the information to the Office of General Secretary.

## V. Benefit-program activities

### A. Ministers pension plans

The ministers pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary features of the plans include four benefit groups, as follows:

- Retirement benefits commencing at age 66, or early retirement benefits in a reduced amount beginning at age 55.
- Long-term disability benefits provided through an insurance company (to all full-time, active participants who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier).
- Survivors' benefits paid to a surviving spouse if death of a participant occurs while in active service.
- Orphans' benefits paid to a participant's orphaned children up to age 18, or to age 21 if in school.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2025, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where they have residence.

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Total</i>
Active ministers	561	227	788
Ministers receiving benefit payments	671	171	842
Spouses and dependents	180	56	236
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	<u>142</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>186</u>
Total	1,554	498	2,052

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. Both plans require a valuation every three years. The valuation dated December 31, 2025, is under way and will be summarized in the Pensions and Insurance Supplement to the agenda for synod. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

#### 1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plans' last valuation (scheduled at a minimum of every three years), on a going concern basis, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$139.1 million for the U.S. plan (as of Dec. 31, 2022) and approximately \$53.8 million for the Canadian plan (as of Dec. 31, 2022). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' future obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents. The valuation data for December 31, 2025, will be included in the Pensions and Insurance Supplement to the agenda for synod.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	<i>December 31, 2025</i>	<i>December 31, 2024</i>
United States (U.S. \$)	\$132,086,038	\$125,556,000
Canada (Can. \$)	98,186,885	93,586,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings along with contributions to the plans provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

## 2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While the basic defined-benefit form of the plan has not been altered, changes were made to benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

Synod 2024 affirmed that the pension plans were created with values that have shaped and guided them (1) to enable ministers to serve in Canada and U.S. while maintaining consistent retirement benefits; (2) to mitigate the impact of serving a smaller congregation; and (3) to honor the covenant of the denomination to care for pastors with long-term disability protection and life insurance (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 811). With that in mind, the pension trustees are exploring broader retirement benefit options that may include a blend of defined contribution plans along with the defined benefit plan(s). The trustees are in the process of exploration and research, with the assistance of plan consultants to develop recommendations. This will include discussion and input from U.S. and Canadian pastors, including bivocational and recently ordained pastors. In addition, the trustees are working on providing more information and education to pastors and churches about the current defined-benefit pension plan and the defined-contribution plan that are available to them, as well as about the importance of building retirement savings through these plans. These tasks are currently in process, and the trustees intend to have recommendations for submission to Synod 2026.

### 3. Funding

All organized churches are plan sponsors and thus are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2026 will be added to the supplemental agenda for synod. The current assessment rate is \$37.20 per member in both Canada and the United States, and direct costs are set at \$7,704 for both countries. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

#### *B. Employees' retirement plans*

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. In the United States, contributions are paid into the two available defined-contribution plans by participating denominational agencies and ministries in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount.

In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In these defined-contribution plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal or provincial regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Empower Retirement and Envoy Financial, while Great-West Trust serves as custodian of the plan's assets. For Canadian participants, Sun Life Financial Group manages and serves as custodian of the plan's assets.

As of December 31, 2025, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$47,437,400 in the United States and \$6,665,554 in Canada. As of that date,

there were 325 participants in the U.S. plans and 118 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Active	190	100
Inactive	135	18

#### *C. Nonretirement employee benefit programs*

There has been some lack of clarity and some tension in the management of nonretirement employee benefit programs, since, over the past few years, the Canadian and U.S. ministry offices have come to recognize that they have fiduciary responsibilities as direct employers. Benefits-program reporting falls within operational reporting to the respective ministry boards.

Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 311 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 214 pastors and employees of local churches, 97 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and no retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs.

In the United States, the denomination offers health, dental, and life coverage to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 321 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 121 pastors and employees of local churches, 111 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 89 retirees. The plans are provided by the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) through a trust established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. RBA was established by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Board of Benefit Services of the Reformed Church in America to provide nonretirement benefit programs for both denominations.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are set by RBA based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

Due to the lack of clarity concerning the management of the insurance programs in our current binational structures, the pension trustees are evaluating whether it is still appropriate to include RBA and CGI under their official mandate, as is currently the case (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 668). Further updates will be provided in the Pensions and Insurance Supplement.

#### *D. Financial disclosures*

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party (see [crcna.org/welcome/governance/financial-statements](http://crcna.org/welcome/governance/financial-statements)). In addition, summary financial statements are

included in the *Agenda for Synod* each year (as an appendix to the Council of Delegates report). Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers pension plans and the employees' retirement plans.

*E. Addition of pastors in churches newly affiliating with the CRCNA*

Recent conversations with a number of pastors and churches exiting the Reformed Church in America and considering membership in the CRCNA have included inquiries about fitting together the pensions of pastors in such a transition. The RCA has worked with a defined-contribution pension system, which is fundamentally different from the CRCNA's defined-benefit pension plans. Careful assessments are being made to equitably and wisely incorporate the pension needs of pastors who may decide to enter the CRCNA.

**VI. Oversight of retirement plans for unordained CRC employees**

In 1951, in response to requests from the CRC's Board of World Missions, synod created a retirement program for unordained missions employees, a program later expanded to include all employees of CRCNA agencies (*Acts of Synod 1951*, pp. 69, 308-15; *Acts of Synod 1964*, pp. 21, 184-87). For many years this retirement program was overseen by its own committee, and that responsibility was transferred to the Ministers Pension Committee in 1992 (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 685). Although functional management of these plans has largely been taken over by the CRCNA's Human Resources staff in Canada and the United States, both plans formally report to the Pension Fund boards today. As provisions for retirement benefits have become an expected part of standard employment practices, it makes sense to restructure the oversight of these benefits plans so that the pension fund boards no longer have this responsibility.

The preferred structure is for the U.S. Employee Savings Plan (ESP) to serve the U.S. CRCNA (including ReFrame Ministries) employees and for the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) in Canada to serve the employees in Canada. World Renew employees' participation would be determined in consultation with the respective national boards of that organization. These changes would allow the plan better to reflect the CRCNA's workforce needs, compensation strategy, and benefits philosophy.

Restructuring the ESP and the RRSP under CRCNA governance will improve fiduciary alignment, enhance employee outcomes, and provide greater flexibility to manage and evolve the plan in support of the CRCNA's mission and workforce.

**VII. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees, the U.S. Pension Trustees, the director of partnership administration, and the executive director of CEB Services when insurance matters and matters pertaining to insurance and retirement plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2026 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of an ordained pastor's distributions from their CRC 403(b)(9) Retirement Income Plan in 2026 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that those funds are used to rent or provide a home.

D. That synod transfer oversight and administration of the retirement plans for unordained employees to the respective national ministry organizations, and authorize the Office of General Secretary to make any necessary changes to the regulations of the Ministers Pension Plan mandates to implement these decisions.

*Grounds:*

1. Pension boards are primarily structured to oversee defined-benefit plans, not participant-directed defined-contribution plans such as the U.S. Employee Savings Plan and the Registered Retirement Savings Plan in Canada. The current structure has limited the CRCNA's ability to implement plan improvements and adapt to employee needs.
2. Transitioning governance to the national ministry organizations would allow for more timely plan enhancements, stronger fiduciary oversight, and improved alignment with regulatory requirements.
3. This change would bring our accountability structures into formal alignment with our current practices and eliminate confusion about reporting and authorization of changes to the retirement programs.
4. This request recognizes synod's previous decisions regarding retirement plans for unordained employees of the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 69; *Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 21; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 685).

E. That synod by way of the ballot appoint one new member to a three-year term on the U.S. Pension Trustees beginning July 1, 2026.

F. That synod thank Lloyd Bierma for his time of dedicated service with the Ministers Pension Plan.

Pensions and Insurance  
Roberta Vriesema, director of partnership administration

## ReFrame Ministries

### I. Introduction — mission and mandate

ReFrame Ministries serves as the worldwide media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. What began in 1939 as a single English-language radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, has grown into a global media ministry serving people and communities across cultures and continents.

Today our vision is that the lives and worldviews of *all people around the globe* will be transformed by God's gospel message. Relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ReFrame creates contextual media resources that proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen the church globally.

This work takes place through four core ministry commitments:

- Church-rooted: We believe the Holy Spirit works through the church, so we partner with churches to build and strengthen the body of Christ.
- Major languages: We strive to reach the widest possible audience, so we create content in the world's most spoken languages.
- Context-driven: We work with local partners who faithfully contextualize the gospel message and use the most effective media channels connecting with diverse audiences.
- Relationship-focused: Following the example of Christ, we seek to build long-term, discipling relationships with individual members of our mass audiences.

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

ReFrame Ministries' work is guided by the Great Commission (Matthew 28) and aligns with the CRCNA's fivefold calling. Through global media mission, faith formation, servant leadership, mercy and justice action, and gospel proclamation, ReFrame seeks to work alongside churches and ministries worldwide in faithful witness to Christ.

#### A. Global mission

ReFrame ministers in nine major world languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. We also have special translation projects in Korean and Urdu, as well as support for a women's program in war-torn Ukraine.

ReFrame uses popular forms of communication to share the gospel globally, reaching countries where traditional Christian missions often face restrictions. Through radio, print, TV, the internet, mobile apps, and social media, we bring the message of Christ to people without access to a faith community. As people worldwide share their experiences of encountering Jesus for the first time through ReFrame's media resources, it's clear that God is working through the CRCNA and ReFrame's international partners.

1. ReFrame works with about 170 indigenous staff members and more than 400 volunteers around the world. Through its partnerships, ReFrame has a ministry presence in over 50 countries through production and discipleship centers, broadcast locations, and resource distribution. ReFrame and its partners reach people in nearly every country through the internet and mobile applications.
2. ReFrame's international partnership ministry teams have developed 20 ministry websites in nine languages, supported by 73 social-media pages. ReFrame and its partners produce 47 audio programs, about half of which are aired on the radio, and 49 TV/video programs.
3. Together with our partners, we distribute nearly 2 million printed devotional booklets annually in six languages. In general, the number of printed daily devotions has decreased because we can reach more people in more places digitally via email, Facebook, and smartphone apps. We send more than 400,000 devotional emails daily.

#### *B. Faith formation on the global mission field*

ReFrame provides faith-formation resources in English, primarily for North American audiences, and supports culturally relevant discipleship resources across its international language ministries.

In all of our language ministries, faith formation resources are produced and distributed in print and digital formats, including devotional resources, audio programs, video content, and interactive online resources. These materials offer daily encouragement to believers through Scripture and provide accessible entry points for seekers exploring the Christian faith.

Audio and video programs apply God's Word to everyday life, offering biblical and Reformed perspectives on cultural and spiritual questions within local contexts. In times of crisis and uncertainty these programs also provide pastoral care, encouragement, and connection. These programs range from daily, two-minute devotional reflections to hour-long church services for people who can only attend remotely. Regardless of length, each video program offers the hope of God's truth in an easily accessible format. Most of these programs are available on social-media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube.

#### *C. Servant leadership on the global mission field*

ReFrame Ministries is blessed to work with indigenous ministry leaders gifted in ministry and media. These leaders and their teams provide culturally relevant outreach in their respective languages and cultural settings.

International ministry leaders include Rev. Youssef Adel Hanna (Arabic); Pastor Jerry An (Chinese); Justin Sterenberg (English); Rev. Marc Nabie (French); Rev. Arliyanus Larosa (Indonesian); Rev. Masao Yamashita (Japanese); Rev. Hernandez Dias Lopes (Portuguese); Rev. Huascar de la Cruz (Spanish); and a Hindi ministry leader whose name is withheld for security reasons.

We praise God for these leaders and their various partnerships with on-the-ground media-ministry workers, denominations, and organizations.

Language-ministry leaders guide teams that serve not only as content creators but also as pastors, teachers, and mentors. In many contexts this leadership includes equipping volunteers, supporting church leaders, and walking with individuals seeking faith or growing as disciples through ReFrame's media outreach.

Examples of training initiatives include the following:

1. French ministry leader Rev. Marc Nabie hosted Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) events in several West African nations.
2. ReFrame's Hindi (India) and Arabic (Egypt) ministry partners provided training and curriculum for vacation Bible school and Sunday school teachers.
3. Rev. Hernandes Dias Lopes leads online courses for church leaders and pastors in Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking countries.
4. Pastor Jerry An facilitates and leads events for Chinese church leaders in Asia and North America, promoting media for sharing the gospel.

#### *D. Loving mercy and doing justice on the global mission field*

While the mission of ReFrame is primarily global media missions, ministry teams and partners have opportunities to provide comfort and assistance to people who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and disadvantaged. Many programs that ReFrame and its partners produce include messages of hope for people living in challenging circumstances—questioning their beliefs where it could be dangerous to do so, living in physical poverty, or suffering from sickness. In these ways we also address social-justice issues through our various programs in several languages.

1. Rev. Arliyanus Larosa and his team coordinate a program that gifts goats to families in need. When bred, the goats provide income opportunities by producing milk and meat.
2. ReFrame's Hindi ministry produces content for people who struggle to earn income. Leaders share the gospel while providing sewing machines and training to women.

#### *E. Gospel proclamation and worship*

ReFrame's core mission is proclamation using various media to share the gospel in nine major world languages. ReFrame continually seeks culturally relevant and effective ways to proclaim the gospel and call people into a relationship with God.

1. We have increasingly moved to a partnership model with local denominations and organizations in our international ministries. This provides greater opportunity for local ownership and sustainability. In Brazil, for example, we partner closely with congregations in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil to distribute biblical content for church members and

the communities they serve in missions, including communities as far as Angola, in southern Africa.

2. As the world moves toward using less paper than in the past for publications, ReFrame expands the CRC's use of digital outreach for sharing the gospel: developing new apps, growing email and social-media audiences, and sharing almost all content online, even if it's also available offline.

### **III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey***

ReFrame offers a variety of programs and resources to help congregations and individuals work toward the milestones named in our denominational ministry plan, *Our Journey*.

#### *A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline*

1. Our English-language ministry team has grown a network of more than 7,000 prayer partners in North America and globally who pray for people who respond to our media-outreach programs.
2. Our *Today* devotions, produced since 1950, are available in print, at TodayDevotional.com, by email subscription, on podcast websites, and through mobile applications. We print and distribute about 210,000 *Today* booklets six times annually, and more than 350,000 people receive *Today* emails. In addition, about 75,000 people use the *Today* devotional app on their mobile devices.
3. *Groundwork* is a 30-minute audio program and podcast that builds biblical foundations for life. *Groundwork* guides listeners in casual but thoughtful conversations about practical applications of God's Word in today's world.

#### *B. Listening to the voices of every generation*

1. *Kids Corner* is a program reaching children ages 6-12. This program has transitioned from a single audio program to a growing assortment of online resources for children's spiritual growth across North America. *Kids Corner* launched a new app in 2025, making these new features available with an accompanying parent-friendly blog.
2. People of all ages respond to messages in our *Today* devotions. A class of high school students responds to a new set of devotions each year by taking photos and writing reflections on the topic presented that month. Students read the devotions, look for daily reminders of the message content, and take photos of those things.

#### *C. Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships*

1. ReFrame's global outreach is strengthened through crucial networks of North American and international partners. Strong collaborations create effective partnerships for mission, allowing resources to be invested wisely. In addition to our ministries within the CRCNA, ReFrame works cooperatively with the following Reformed denominations worldwide:

- North America (Words of Hope, affiliated with the Reformed Church in America)
- Japan (Reformed Church in Japan)
- Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
- Mexico (National Presbyterian Church in Mexico)
- Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church)
- Egypt (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile)

In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe, Africa, India, and surrounding countries, as well as with house churches and Christian ministries in China.

2. In partnership with the CRC's Korean Council since 2008, ReFrame has published a bilingual Korean-English version of the *Today* devotions.
3. ReFrame continues to broaden the reach of Faith Alive's *Seeking God's Face* devotional book. After launching an English-language website with the devotional content in 2021, ReFrame's Chinese, Arabic, and French ministry partners have also translated the content for their audiences.

*D. Sharing the gospel, living it missionally, and planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts*

1. ReFrame's English-language ministry produces ebooks as downloadable PDFs. Topics from the most recent resources include "Focus on the Cross" (a Lenten devotional from *Today*), "Waiting in Expectation" (an Advent devotional from *Today*), "Revelation: A Comfort for Believers" (*Groundwork*), "How Do I Pray?" two volumes (ReFrame's Prayer Ministry), and "Faith Practices for Families," four volumes (*Kids Corner*).
2. ReFrame's Japanese ministry partners offer videos to churches that are part of the Reformed Church in Japan. These videos help introduce the church to prospective visitors and local seekers and offer a glimpse of what a Sunday is like in a typical church. In this way, ReFrame helps to grow the global church in Japan using media resources.
3. ReFrame's Hindi ministry team supports the work of church planters in northern India. The team hosts radio-program listener gatherings and offers resources to communities of believers. These gatherings often take place in house churches that eventually become church plants.

#### **IV. Recommendation**

That synod grant the director of ReFrame Ministries, Kurt Selles, and the director of administration for ReFrame Ministries, Nellie Kooistra, the privilege of the floor when matters about ReFrame Ministries are addressed.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

ReFrame Ministries,  
Kurt Selles, director

# Resonate Global Mission

## I. Introduction

Resonate Global Mission is your Christian Reformed mission agency. We exist because the Christian Reformed Church has discerned—through synod—that mission is essential to the life of the church and that this work is best carried out together. Resonate is meant to be the church’s preferred partner on mission: trusted, accountable, and deeply connected to congregations and classes as we join God’s work locally, globally, and through the planting of new churches.

Over the past year we have invested much in rebuilding and strengthening relationships across the denomination. We have shown up in classes, congregations, and conversations with listening ears, a prayerful presence, and a renewed commitment to walk alongside churches wherever they find themselves. This posture reflects a deep conviction that mission belongs first to the church. Resonate’s role is to support, connect, and equip God’s people as they discern their next faithful steps.

Through the work of Resonate and our partners around the world, God is writing a bigger story and inviting the Christian Reformed Church to step into it. We continue to see signs of God’s work: new churches taking root, leaders being trained across cultures, young adults encountering Christ, and congregations rediscovering their calling to live and share the gospel. At the same time, we share honestly that this season has required hard decisions. Over the past year Resonate has taken decisive steps to address financial realities, including reducing expenses, and has reached a place of greater stability. For that we are deeply grateful.

As a denomination, you have asked Resonate to lead boldly on mission. This calling requires shared commitment. If the church desires to see increased church planting and renewed mission vitality, we must continue to give sacrificially.

We do not ask churches to support *our* vision, but to invest in *their own* calling—to step forward in the convictions we confess and to commit our resources according to the mission we say matters. Together, trusting the Spirit’s leading, we step into a bigger story. Thank you for your generosity.

## II. Reflecting on Our Calling

As the mission agency of the Christian Reformed Church, Resonate Global Mission exists to walk alongside congregations as they join God’s work in the world. Our calling is not to carry out a mission on behalf of the church but to help the church more fully live into *its* calling—locally, globally, and through the planting of new churches. This shared calling is rooted in Scripture and shaped by our Reformed convictions that God is at work in the world and invites his people to participate.

The ministry plan names five interwoven aspects of our calling: faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship. All five are present in Resonate's work.

*A. Our core initiatives*

1. Global mission

*Global mission* expresses the conviction that the church is called to bear witness to Jesus Christ beyond its own culture and place. Through global mission, Resonate partners with churches, missionaries, and global ministry leaders so that the Christian Reformed Church may participate faithfully and humbly in God's work among the nations.

We accomplish this work by

- walking alongside career and partner missionaries serving in more than 40 countries.
- proclaiming the gospel, discipling new believers, and strengthening local churches through long-term, relational presence.
- investing in leadership development where access to theological education is limited.
- equipping pastors, teachers, and lay leaders through Timothy Leadership Training.
- forming educators and school leaders through Educational Care.
- bringing churches and missionaries together as partners on mission through training, member care, partnership development, prayer, and financial support.

Our Global Mission Core Initiative reflects our conviction that global mission is not transactional or one-directional but relational, formative, and mutually transformative. As churches in the CRC engage globally, God continues to renew faith, imagination, and hope within our own denomination.

Example and story: *Hope in Hard Places*: [resonateglobalmission.org/hope](https://resonateglobalmission.org/hope)

2. Local mission

*Local mission* focuses on helping congregations live out and share the gospel where God has already placed them. Through coaching, training, and relational presence, Resonate's regional teams walk alongside churches as they discern how to join God's work in their neighborhoods and communities.

We accomplish this work by

- supporting campus ministries across Canada and the United States and connecting churches with universities and colleges in ministry on more than 40 campuses across North America.
- walking alongside churches through regional coaching, discernment, and missional accompaniment.

- facilitating Witness Trips, Cohort fellowships, and other opportunities that disciple participants in applying their faith and living it through mission work.
- equipping churches through the Witness Curriculum, Discover Your Bible, and other resources for missional practices and postures.
- maintaining consistent presence and relationship building through North America Regional Mission Teams.

Our Local Mission Core Initiative reflects the belief that mission is not confined to distant places but begins with faithful presence, attentive listening, and obedience in everyday life.

Example and story: *A Space to Ask Questions*: [resonateglobalmission.org/questions](https://resonateglobalmission.org/questions)

### 3. Church planting

*Church planting* brings together local and global mission as new Christian communities form among diverse peoples and contexts. Resonate partners with congregations, classes, and leaders to cultivate a healthy church-planting ecosystem that supports discernment, leadership development, and long-term sustainability.

We accomplish this work by

- supporting dozens of church plants across North America.
- partnering with classes and parent churches in the discernment and oversight of new church plants.
- assessing, training, and coaching church planters for long-term health and fruitfulness.
- developing apprenticeships and leadership pathways for emerging church planters.
- supporting microchurches and other new expressions of church.
- walking alongside churches serving diaspora and immigrant communities.

Church planting is not only about starting new congregations; it is also a sign of spiritual renewal. As churches plant churches, they rediscover the heart of mission, grow in prayerful dependence on the Spirit, and participate in God’s work of forming new expressions of the body of Christ.

Through Resonate Global Mission the CRCNA is currently supporting 59 church plants, 14 of which are new in the past year. Last year, Synod 2025 commissioned a ten-year plan for church planting. This plan and supporting documentation will be included in the Agenda Supplement.

Example and story: *God’s Doing It!* [resonateglobalmission.org/vive](https://resonateglobalmission.org/vive)

#### *B. Core initiatives coming together as Our Calling*

Resonate’s three core initiatives—global mission, local mission, and church planting—are not separate silos but interconnected expressions of one shared calling. Together they nurture faith formation, cultivate servant

leadership, engage mercy and justice, and proclaim the gospel in word and deed.

In all of this, Resonate's role is to serve, connect, and support—so that congregations may take their next faithful steps in God's mission. We remain convinced that God is writing a bigger story and that the Christian Reformed Church has an important place within it. Our calling is to help the church see where God is at work and to step forward together in trust and obedience.

### **III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey***

Resonate exists to serve our congregations as they share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant churches—a key goal of the *Our Journey* ministry plan—but our work flows through all four aspects of this plan. Resonate's calling is integral to the life of the Christian Reformed Church. We do not pursue mission alongside the church but within it—through relationships with classes, congregations, leaders, and members who together are seeking to be faithful to God's call.

#### *A. Global mission*

Global mission serves the goals of *Our Journey* by inviting the church to lift its eyes beyond its own context and to step into the bigger story of God's work among the nations. It directly supports the ministry plan's call to **share the gospel, live it missionally, and grow in diversity and unity**, while also cultivating faith formation and servant leadership through deep, reciprocal relationships with the global church.

#### 1. Classis engagement

Global mission engagement with classes is rooted in the conviction that the denomination discerns and carries its global calling together. Over the past year, Resonate staff and missionaries have engaged classes by

- sharing stories and realities from global mission fields to strengthen awareness, prayer, and shared ownership of the church's global calling.
- sending representatives to classis meetings to invite delegates into deeper understanding of the role of career and partner missionaries within the life of the denomination.
- encouraging classes to support and walk alongside missionaries through prayer, advocacy, and financial partnership.

#### 2. Church engagement

At the congregational level, global mission focuses on fostering meaningful relationships between churches and missionaries, moving beyond transactional support toward shared ministry and mutual learning. This year, Resonate supported church engagement by

- walking alongside congregations as they deepen relationships with the missionaries they support.

- providing opportunities for churches to learn from and with the global church through stories, visits, and shared ministry experiences.
- helping churches to see global mission not as something delegated to an agency but as an integral part of their own discipleship and faith formation.

### *B. Local mission*

Local mission serves *Our Journey* by helping congregations practice mission as a way of life in the places God has already planted them. This initiative is especially aligned with the ministry plan’s milestones of **cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline, listening to the voices of every generation, and sharing the gospel in everyday contexts**, as churches learn to notice where God is at work in their neighborhoods and join in.

We invite churches into two significant postures/priorities in their missional call. The first is to embrace their call to the “local.” We want congregations and faith communities to discern where God is at work in their neighborhood and surrounding community. The second is for congregations and faith communities to see their place within the global church.

#### 1. Classis engagement

Local mission engagement at the classis level centers on accompaniment, listening, and shared discernment. Resonate’s Regional Mission Teams have continued to be present with classes by

- attending classis meetings to build relationships and maintain consistent connection between Resonate and local leaders.
- listening to the missional questions, challenges, and hopes emerging within each classis.
- supporting classis-level conversations and initiatives related to local mission, church renewal, and witness.
- helping classes connect local mission efforts with broader denominational resources and partnerships.

#### 2. Church engagement

With congregations, local mission emphasizes proximity and trust. Over the past year, Resonate engaged churches by

- walking alongside pastors and leaders through coaching and missional-discernment processes.
- equipping churches with practical tools such as the Witness Curriculum, available at [resonateglobalmission.org/witness](https://resonateglobalmission.org/witness).
- facilitating Witness Trips and volunteer opportunities that expand imagination for mission.
- supporting campus ministries as a key expression of local mission among young adults.
- strengthening Scripture engagement and outreach through Global Coffee Break: [resonateglobalmission.org/globalcoffeebreak](https://resonateglobalmission.org/globalcoffeebreak).

### *C. Church planting*

Church planting serves the goals of *Our Journey* by holding together gospel proclamation, local mission, and renewal in concrete and visible ways. It embodies the ministry plan's call to **plant new churches**, while also advancing **diversity and unity** and fostering spiritual vitality as new Christian communities take shape and reach new people.

The renewed effort we're making to expand church planting is focused on creating a garden where we grow all types of churches and ensure each gets what they need to thrive. This type of ecosystem includes all of our Christian Reformed congregations, whether or not they directly parent a church plant!

#### 1. Classis engagement

Church planting has always been deeply connected to the work of classes, and this continues to be a primary focus of Resonate's engagement. During the past year, Resonate partnered with classes by

- supporting classes in discerning readiness and calling for new church plants.
- assisting with assessment, accountability, and governance processes required for new congregations.
- encouraging hospitality and inclusion toward new expressions of church and diverse leaders.
- sharing learnings and best practices across classes to strengthen the church-planting ecosystem.

#### 2. Church engagement

At the congregational level, church planting engagement focuses on helping churches rediscover their role as participants in God's mission. Resonate supported churches by

- walking alongside parent churches as they discern and nurture new church plants.
- coaching church planters and leadership teams for health, resilience, and sustainability.
- supporting apprenticeships and leadership pathways connected to local congregations.
- encouraging churches to pray for and imagine what new expressions of church God might raise up in their own contexts.

#### 3. Needs for the future of church planting

Synod will receive a report and ten-year plan with much more detail related to the needs of church planting. However, the following three critical needs merit extra mention and are ways churches can support and grow church planting in their own context and begin anytime.

- a. Financial need remains the biggest obstacle to church planting, on the scale of both individual church plants and the denomination as a whole. We ask that every classis encourage their churches to support

church plants locally and with Resonate. A significant number of classes and churches have unused funds designated for church planting—if that is the case in your context, we encourage you to get in touch with Resonate so that we can think creatively together on how to put those funds to work to support church plants in your classis or region.

- b. Hospitality to new kinds of church plants—some leaders of micro-churches, diaspora communities, and young adult communities report not being included at the classical level in the same way that typical, traditional pastors usually are (for example, by being left off the email list or by not receiving notifications of when discussions are happening). One way for a classis to be hospitable is to check in with their church planters to ensure they have a seat at the table.
- c. Church-plant visits—the first step to finding out what your church planters need is to get in touch. We have seen church-plant visits make a big difference in a classis' church-planting engagement. We encourage you to make time to visit a church plant, especially if you sense God's call on your church or classis to plant.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the director of Resonate Global Mission, Kevin DeRaaf, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Resonate Global Mission are addressed.

B. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, encourage all Christian Reformed congregations to recognize the following Sundays as significant opportunities to pray for and to receive an offering for Resonate Global Mission: Easter, Pentecost, the second Sunday in September, and the fourth Sunday in November.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Resonate Global Mission  
Kevin DeRaaf, director

# Thrive

## I. Introduction—mandate and mission

Led by Rev. Lesli van Milligen, Thrive seeks “to engage and accompany Christian Reformed congregations as they seek to faithfully and holistically embody the gospel in their respective contexts” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 956). Synod 2023 entrusted Thrive with the responsibility to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today.

While Thrive’s primary focus is on local Christian Reformed congregations, Thrive’s capacity to encourage and equip congregations is enriched and strengthened by engagement with external associations and partnerships, particularly those that focus on specialized aspects of Thrive’s responsibilities. (See *Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 956-57.)

As can be seen from this mandate, synod charged Thrive to be attentive to a broad spectrum of congregational leadership roles and a wide array of congregational opportunities and needs. The underlying goal or mission that motivates Thrive’s efforts is to equip and encourage congregations in ways that help them thrive in their respective contexts.

In carrying out this mission, with a deliberate regional presence, Thrive engages Christian Reformed congregations through six primary activities: consultations and workshops for churches and classes; coaching and network facilitation for ministry leaders; and resource curation and creation for a wider range of audiences.

Thrive continues to be grateful to God for the honor and privilege of being able to come alongside CRC congregations in order to equip and encourage them in the work they do locally. We continue to experience some degree of change when it comes to staffing. We are thankful to have the Customer Service Team move to Thrive from Ministry Support Services, adding four team members to our staff roster along with the ability to be more closely informed about what resourcing needs are being asked for as well as to share in the support and training of congregational facing staff. Being able to do so as a team of 29 has enabled Thrive to be nimble and responsive to the immediate needs of congregations. We also said goodbye to Ron deVries, our youth and young adult connector, who left us in October. We are using his departure and that of our worship consultant as an opportunity to explore more regionalized support for these two ministry areas so that we can be more contextually relevant. The fact that we continue to support congregations through these shifts highlights both the value of our team approach and how well our team works together. I am grateful to be able to lead such a competent, collaborative, and high-capacity team.

It is worth noting that because of Thrive’s team approach, we were able to immediately respond to synod’s call for more robust support of pastors’

spouses (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 654-55). Thrive pivoted and included a specific track for spouses at its recent Pastors' Gathering, which included support of chaplains, regional pastors, and parish pastors. The spouses track garnered important information on how best churches can use the \$500 support that Synod 2025 urged churches to make available to support pastors' spouses in tangible ways. Several resources are currently being crafted that will help councils and classes better support spouses locally.

## II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Here are a few additional examples of how Thrive has lived into the denomination's ministry priorities:

Thrive supported the faith formation efforts of our congregations in the following ways:

- Collating information gathered from past parent-listening groups where Thrive learned how the CRC can better support faith formation in the home. We are currently disseminating this information in classis meetings.
- Thrive also gathered CRC children's ministry leaders from around North America to learn more about their work and concerns to create stronger support for their ministries.
- Thrive is in the process of experimenting with positions for regional worship connectors, to capitalize on regional relationships and localized worship needs. This will entail a slower roll-out than hiring one central worship specialist, but this approach will improve responsiveness to contextual challenges and opportunities.

Thrive focused heavily in areas that support servant leadership and church renewal efforts (reported on in a separate part of synod's agenda) in our congregations by

- hosting the Pastors' Gathering in Niagara Falls, Ontario, which supported the work and well-being of parish pastors, chaplains, regional pastors, and their spouses. Total attendance was 116 participants from across North America.
- gathering groups of pastors who are in the midst of particular periods of transition. One group to highlight is pastors who are pastoring vulnerable churches that are experiencing decline. This group is meant to tend to the well-being of both pastor and congregation as they face difficult decisions about future viability.
- facilitating Gather Classis Muskegon. This is a concentrated five-hour event that allows local church members to experience Gather and is available to both classes and individual congregations.
- training young adults to become *Thriving Essentials* facilitators.
- continuing to support congregations and classes through Next Steps Discernment in response to Synod 2024, especially in conjunction with discussions pertaining to disaffiliation.
- supporting pastors through facilitated mentoring groups.

- supporting chaplains by ensuring that they are finding healthy connections with both their classis and oversight congregations.
- creating video resources for the Pastor Search Process and translating key Pastor Search Resources into Korean.

In the area of gospel proclamation and worship Thrive supported congregations in the following ways:

- With the resignation of our worship consultant, Thrive is pivoting to a more regional approach to worship support. In order to do this shift well, Thrive has been learning from Resonate about how they utilize and support their local mission leaders. As we move in this direction, we will take a slow and steady approach that will lead to sustainability for this position while relying on the continued good work of the Calvin Institute of Worship to support the worship needs of CRCNA congregations.

Thrive supported congregations in the area of mercy and justice as follows:

- Hosting the “Finding Hope in Hospitality” event and the binational immigration prayer vigil to help congregations aid newcomers to North America.
- Continuing to partner with the Reformed Church in America to support disability and accessibility resources for congregations.

Thrive supported congregations in the area of global mission as well. Recognizing that global mission is at our doorstep, Thrive meets regularly with Resonate Global Mission staff in order to ensure that our efforts are aligned with each other and that Thrive is aware of resources and support that are necessary for congregations growing with newcomers to North America. The full leadership teams of Thrive and Resonate have met together in order to find areas of synergy between the church-renewal and church-planting efforts of the denomination. This collaboration will continue to be fruitful.

### **III. Connecting with churches**

Thrive specifically supported cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline by

- prioritizing the support of faith practices in the home. This has been our focus for the past year with the desire to help pastors and youth ministry staff better respond to the needs of the families in their congregations.
- continuing to focus on prayer and faith practices as part of our own team rhythms. Aside from opportunities to participate in CRCNA-wide devotional times, Thrive staff meet monthly as a team for prayer and scriptural engagement.
- creating resources like *Thriving Essentials* that help congregations discern their unique missional identity.

Thrive continues to listen to the voices of every generation:

- Through our Generation Spark initiative (shared with the RCA), Thrive staff continue to help congregations engage with emerging adults and young people through a supported mentoring program that helps congregations pair older members of their congregations with younger members to work together on meaningful ministry challenges.
- Thrive is creating a more robust system of helping our synod young adult representatives to prepare for, engage in, and process their time at synod, including opportunities for previous young adult representatives to mentor new ones.

Thrive promoted growth in diversity, reconciliation, and welcome in the following ways:

- Thrive continues to support cohorts for congregations who desire to become more intercultural.
- Thrive is intentionally meeting with second-generation leaders from various diaspora groups in order to learn how to support these leaders who bridge generations within those cultures.
- Thrive has raised funds for translation through its Revelation 7 fund in order that more of our resources can be translated into languages beyond Spanish and Korean as new language groups continue to become a part of our denomination.
- Thrive is supporting a facilitated mentoring group for Black women clergy.
- Thrive's entire staff has completed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment in order to serve our churches and leaders more effectively by supporting their growth in cultural competency. This effort strengthens Thrive's mission to promote cultural awareness and to equip leaders for more effective, inclusive ministry. Professional development opportunities in this area enhance this effort as well.

Thrive supports sharing the gospel by

- helping congregations identify their missional calling within their unique contexts. *Thriving Essentials* workshops continue to be our most effective tool for helping congregations engage in a renewed commitment to sharing the gospel.
- working closely with Resonate in supporting church planters in their work.

#### **IV. Other significant activities**

Thrive has been focused on creating a Church Renewal Journey requested by Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 976) that includes both learning activities and discernment activities that congregations can choose from with the help of coaching support. This approach recognizes that no two congregations are on the same learning and renewal path, and it allows congregations to discern and travel at their own pace and capacity levels. More on

this renewal plan can be found in a separate report to synod coming as part of the Agenda Supplement.

Thrive continues to be grateful for grant support from Lilly Endowment Inc. Lilly grants support ministry initiatives that Thrive is committed to in relation to faith formation and pastoral well-being. We received a scaling grant that will enable us to dedicate significant funding for the church-renewal work that synod has tasked Thrive to do.

## **V. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the director of Thrive, or a designee, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Thrive are addressed.

B. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, remind all Christian Reformed congregations that Thrive exists “to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today”; and that synod encourage ministry leaders and CRC members to reach out to Thrive for support.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Thrive  
Lesli van Milligen, director

## World Renew

### I. Mandate and mission

“As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12).

For World Renew, the calling described by Paul and Timothy to the Colossians is woven into daily ministry with churches, communities, and partners around the world. We were founded in 1962 by a committee of Christian Reformed Church members as the denomination’s diaconal agency in response to a request from synod. Our mandate was “to minister in the name of our Lord to those distressed by reason of the violence of nature, the carnage of war, or other calamities of life, and to relieve the suffering of the needy in the world” (see *Acts of Synod 1962*, p. 333).

World Renew has worked to fulfill this mandate with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience for more than 60 years, reaching out in Christ’s name to support vulnerable people around the world. Through global staff and meaningful localized partnerships, World Renew works to respond to God’s call to live justly, love mercy, and serve Christ as the international community faces the challenges of injustice, hunger, displacement, and disaster. Because we serve the risen Savior, we aim to help renew hope where there is despair; reconcile lives into right relationship with our Creator, our neighbor, our world, and ourselves; and restore creation through sustainable practices and processes so that every one of God’s people can flourish.

#### A. 2025 by the numbers:

- World Renew served 720,633 participants in 1,449 communities.
- We partnered with 58 church-based agencies and local organizations.
- 340,982 participants engaged in development programs supported by World Renew.
- 379,651 people were offered assistance through disaster response.
- 1,417 volunteers served via Disaster Response Services or other volunteer roles.
- We helped repair or rebuild 209 homes.
- We supported the resettlement of 183 refugees in Canada.
- 384 congregations engaged in justice and climate witness work.
- 669 congregations and 8,108 households supported World Renew financially.

#### B. How we work: an integrated approach

World Renew’s approach is participatory and locally led. Communities discern their priorities, we strengthen local leaders and local organizational capacity, and together we design programs that endure. In our work, the integration of community health, food security, economic opportunity, disaster response, and justice helps communities and households meet immediate

needs while tackling the root causes of poverty, vulnerability, marginalization, and injustice. In this work we seek to make justice tangible and to offer communities dignity and hope.

## **II. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey* (Ministry Plan)**

### *A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline*

World Renew contributes to this milestone by providing resources to churches such as devotional guides, prayer guides, and worship resources in connection with our designated Sundays and special-offering resources. Prayer and spiritual discipline must also be built on the knowledge of needs and contexts. World Renew provides opportunities to engage with and resources to learn about global needs and the work the church is doing to address them.

Throughout the world, we integrate prayer and spiritual development into our work in communities. We model prayer through resources and reminders to our supporters so that they can lift up the prayers and praises of our ministry teams together. We support our global teammates as they visit churches and individuals across the Christian Reformed Church in North America, involving them in our work financially but also through prayer. In 2025 in the United States, we recorded 181 church visits and planned calls and one school visit. In Canada, we recorded 122 church visits and planned calls and five school visits.

Internally, prayer is a regular practice among our teams. To learn more about prayer and spiritual discipline at World Renew, please refer to the article “Prayer in the Workplace” (*The Banner*, April 2025).

### *B. Listening to voices of every generation*

Through visits, videos, podcasts, and webinars, World Renew offers peer-to-peer learning opportunities. We collaborate with ministries such as Diaconal Ministries Canada and CRCNA justice teams to contribute to meaningful dialogue around living out our faith. Our Equipped to Educate curriculum has been used in approximately 40 classrooms, addressing young people from kindergarten through high school.

World Renew supporters of all ages in the Christian Reformed Church are uniquely positioned to engage in our work. Many seniors support our work based on their own life experiences of war, displacement, immigration, and poverty, with a meaningful understanding of our work. For younger churchgoers who have grown up in a time of easy access to global information and a growing need to find purpose in their lives and careers, World Renew provides professional, experienced, and evidence-based work for them to support, learn from, and engage with.

Our volunteer opportunities have the exciting characteristic of often consisting of intergenerational groups who can come together to learn, experience, and reflect. In 2025, 114 people participated in our learning trips, with

49 Americans and 65 Canadians traveling with us to our programs around the world to listen and learn, discovering how God is at work.

In many of our communities, elders are highly esteemed, but youth are often overlooked. Our youth-engagement programming helps to motivate young people to pursue education, make healthy life choices and overcome trauma. We also work with volunteers, interns, and church groups to provide resources to young people so that they can learn and grow in a deeper understanding of biblical compassion and justice, whether in the U.S. and Canada or around the world.

*C. Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships*

World Renew provides the CRCNA with an opportunity to engage in global programming and to enter into partnership with a diverse set of 58 local churches and organizations around the world. In response to the CRC's milestone commitment to provide "welcome to newcomers," World Renew also has a unique program that partners churches directly with refugees and asylum seekers from around the world in our Canadian Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program. Through this program, churches submitted new sponsorship applications for 135 refugees last year. Learning about and engaging in World Renew's work and resources give CRCNA members the opportunity to better understand global diversity, even within the Christian faith, and to enter into real community and individual stories of change. Further, in seeking justice and reconciliation, World Renew's programs and resources provide evidence and experience-based avenues to engage in justice advocacy locally, nationally, and internationally. This year, our 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and our advocacy toward the Canadian government regarding refugee and asylum seekers were examples of opportunities for informed and collective justice and reconciliation advocacy.

Because the World Renew team is committed to cultivating a sense of belonging, we seek to hire staff in ways that reflect the body of Christ, in anticipation of the day when people of every tribe, language, and nation will worship the Holy Lamb together. We look for opportunities to support people who are most vulnerable so that each person, regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, or age, can be welcomed and celebrated. As we do so, Jesus shows us the incredible journey of justice in which he has invited us to participate. World Renew is deeply committed to diversity, and we monitor our efforts to ensure we are growing toward this biblical ideal, increasingly reflecting the composition of the communities in which we live, work, and serve.

In our programs, peacebuilding and trauma healing allow participants to overcome differences and become unified in their visions for their communities. Through our communications, every effort is made to represent diversity and dignity, and to highlight the participants' experiences in their own voices whenever possible. Every year, World Renew participates in the

global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. This year the focus of that campaign included understanding and prevention of digital violence as well as physical, mental, and emotional abuse. Additionally, we partnered with Friendship Ministries Canada in 2025 to demonstrate how every person, regardless of ability, can contribute to this world in wonderful ways. Friendship clubs across Canada raised funds for our World Hunger campaign using our Peter Fish banks.

*D. Sharing the gospel, living it missionally, and planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts*

Contributing to the flourishing of all people as imagebearers of God is central to the good news that Christ came to bring us life in all its fullness, both in this world and the next. World Renew's global partnerships with churches give room for missional living in a remarkable way as communities across the world share with each other, pray for each other, and build each other up.

World Renew partners with many churches and Christian organizations globally. Through our support, these churches and organizations are better able to live out their biblical mandate to share the love of God through their holistic ministries in their own communities. World Renew cannot support direct evangelism in its programs because it must provide all community and individual projects based on need and vulnerability and cannot tie this work to conversion or church membership. This is the church's best attempt to reflect the example of Christ's holistic ministry to the lost. It is also a response to Christ's challenge to provide that cup of cold water, to feed the hungry, and to cloth the naked. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these . . . you did for me," he said (Matt. 25:40).

In the U.S. and Canada there are currently more than four dozen churches committed to partnerships with World Renew projects.

One beautiful way in which God's family is living missionally with the support of World Renew is through our Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program (RSRP). Sponsoring churches are challenged to host families in crisis, offer financial support, and provide community as they adjust to life in Canada. In 2025, RSRP worked with 32 sponsoring groups.

Another way World Renew supports missional living is through Disaster Response Services (DRS). Whether they are sending and supporting volunteers to help rebuild homes for people made vulnerable by natural disasters, or participating, hosting, and organizing within affected communities, congregations and dedicated volunteers help to make DRS a reality. DRS's work provides the CRCNA and its members an opportunity to share God's love in tangible and relational ways. Many DRS volunteers tell stories of holistically transformed lives in the communities where they have worked. In 2025, DRS worked with dozens of congregations to serve 2,367 individuals.

### III. Our ministry in action: program updates

#### A. Community development

##### Asha's\* Story

At just 16 years of age, Asha was married off by her father to ease the family's financial burden. But without a dowry, Asha paid a heavy price. Her husband, who struggled with alcohol addiction, and her in-laws subjected her to relentless abuse. When she became pregnant, Asha fled back to her parents' home, only to face harsh criticism and blame. She felt trapped, helpless, and alone.

Like many girls who marry young, Asha never finished school. She lacked many of the skills needed to earn a living. She took on occasional day work, but her future seemed hopeless. Then, in May 2022, World Renew's local partner launched a Food Security and Resilience Project in her village. Asha joined a women's savings group supported by the project, contributing regularly and attending weekly meetings. Her perseverance and vulnerability inspired the group to select her for poultry-rearing training facilitated by World Renew's partner. In 2024, Asha completed the training and received five chickens to start her own business. Within three months, those five chickens multiplied to 35. By December, she sold 15 chickens, earning 5,000 taka (\$58 CAD/\$42 USD). Today, Asha owns 25 chickens and plans to buy 10 more. Her income helps to provide stability, and her confidence has soared.

Now 28 years old, Asha shares her knowledge with other women in her group. Encouraged by her success, they too are raising chickens and earning income. Asha's joy comes from seeing others thrive. "I am thankful for the training and encouragement that helped me become self-reliant," she says.

\*Participant's actual name and location withheld for security reasons

#### 1. Food security

Families learn and adopt sustainable agriculture and climate-smart agricultural practices, improve access to water, enhance soil fertility, and develop better systems for crop handling storage and marketing so that food or money is available year-round. In Tanzania, after an accident left Juma unable to walk, isolation and loss of income followed. World Renew's local partner, Africa Inland Church Tanzania, visited Juma through the Integrated Food Security and Livelihood project, providing agriculture training, seeds, and a water pump. Juma established a thriving cabbage field (begun with about 300 seedlings), restoring household income and dignity. "I realized I am still a recognized person," he said.

#### 2. Community health (maternal and child health)

In many of the countries where World Renew works, pregnancy, childbirth, and the first two years of a child's life are some of the most tenuous and dangerous for mothers and children alike. When proper nutrition and health care are not available, child and maternal mortality rates rise, and

children who do survive are often stunted (delayed in physical and cognitive development). World Renew-supported health teams equip community volunteers, clinics, and families to improve nutrition, sanitation, and access to health care, reducing preventable illness and death. In Uganda, Betty safely delivered her first child with support from a World Renew village health team member. A motorcycle voucher program enabled urgent transport for lifesaving care. Her family testifies: “May God continue to bless World Renew and everyone who makes it possible to support mothers like her.”

### 3. Economic opportunity

Linking both our health and agriculture programming, World Renew works with partners and communities to build, support, and sustain livelihoods that bring dignity to families and support the health and food security of households at the same time. For example, village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) are a kind of community banking system that helps to build financial inclusion, resilience, and enterprise. In the Sahel region, Saminu moved from unpredictable harvesting and outmigration to a stable, homebased tailoring business. Through his VSLA he saved, accessed a small loan, reinvested profits, and purchased a sewing machine—keeping his family together and “clothed” with dependable income and hope.

#### *B. Justice and peace*

The Justice and Peace Team coordinates justice assessments, capacity building, public engagement, advocacy, and peacebuilding to address systemic barriers—weak governance, discrimination, and violence—that erode dignity and undermine development. Grounded in Proverbs 31:8, the team helps to make justice tangible so that communities experience lasting peace and equality.

#### Joseph’s Story

When Joseph’s father migrated to Spain, he left behind family and responsibility. For Joseph, the emotional toll was devastating. Angry and hurt, he became rebellious, fell behind in school, and repeated seventh grade three times. Living with his mother, newborn brother, and stepfather, Joseph felt abandoned and hopeless.

In 2024, with encouragement from his grandmother, Joseph joined Strong Communities, a program facilitated by World Renew’s local partner in Honduras, the Association for a Just Society (ASJ). This initiative addresses systemic issues like domestic violence, broken homes, and community violence: root causes that undermine dignity and peace.

Program staff identified Joseph as high-risk, but through weekly sessions on preventing violence, self-care, and leadership, Joseph began to change. His family noticed a marked improvement in his behavior. He showed respect, tolerance, and a sense of belonging. Psychological support revealed Joseph’s resilience and openness to growth. He learned to manage emotions and embrace new challenges.

“I began to feel less angry and more self-confident,” Joseph says. “I’ve learned to deal with negative emotions and to support my friends and family. My perspective on life has changed.”

### *C. Humanitarian and emergency affairs*

**International Disaster Response (IDR):** In 22 countries last year, World Renew and its partners provided emergency food, water, shelter, sanitation, cash, and livelihood recovery, accompanied by long-term work that rebuilds homes, revitalizes income, and strengthens community preparedness. IDR served a total of more than 382,018 individuals last year.

**Disaster Response Services:** DRS volunteers repaired or rebuilt 209 homes in the United States, serving 2,367 people.

**Refugee Sponsorship:** Churches across Canada welcomed 183 newcomers this year, and 32 sponsoring groups submitted applications, collectively representing 135 refugees.

### **Maranatha CRC’s story**

Churches across Canada have opened their doors, helping more than 11,500 refugees since 1979 find safety, dignity, and a new beginning. But the impact of this welcome extends far beyond any arrival date, often becoming a lifelong connection. After 1975, many Vietnamese families fled their country, mostly on boats, in search of safety. Compelled by the biblical call to “welcome the stranger” (Heb. 13:2), Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, stepped forward in faith. The church sponsored about 65 refugees, walking alongside each family as they rebuilt their lives in Canada.

Decades later, many of those families still live in Edmonton. Some have built businesses, raised families, and become essential parts of their communities. But the connection to the church that first welcomed them never faded. Jack, a sponsor from the church, remembers one young man arriving at the church and gently helping his elderly father up the steps. The young man explained that his father had been one of the refugees welcomed by the church many years earlier. His father had built a successful food-store business, which is now a family company with seven stores across Alberta and British Columbia. As he entered his later years, the father felt a deep desire to return to the place that had first offered his family safety, kindness, and hope. He presented a check to the church in the amount of \$30,000, insisting they accept it as a gift of gratitude and remembrance. Today, part of that gift is helping to support Maranatha CRC’s next refugee sponsorship in partnership with World Renew. One generation supported the next, carrying on a legacy rooted in Christ’s love. This is the power of welcome.

## Transitions

In the past year, World Renew has engaged in organizational realignment to strengthen mission impact and stewardship. As part of this work, programming concluded in Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, with gratitude for many years of faithful ministry and prayer for partners and communities continuing their journeys.

Looking ahead, World Renew seeks to deepen its presence and impact in fragile and conflict-affected regions; grow capacity for rapid, high-quality response; expand peacebuilding and justice work; and use data and technology to learn, improve, and demonstrate outcomes. With your partnership, we aim to bring lifesaving aid, restore dignity, and help communities rebuild for a resilient future.

World Renew is also seeking to strengthen its commitment to localization and shifting power toward partnerships and community work closest to people who are made most vulnerable by hunger, poverty, and crisis. World Renew has been blessed by consistent giving from Christian Reformed churches, allowing us to build our local church and partner capacity and reduce the need to be present in-country. In many places, we have worked for decades to support and build that local capacity, and we are now ready to transition to a more genuine, partner-led program model. The reduction of our own presence will allow us to invest more in our partners and their programs while World Renew staff will continue to support partners in institutional grant acquisition, program quality, measurement and innovation, and donor compliance.

## IV. Leadership

This year, World Renew welcomed a familiar friend to serve again in a new role. Peter Timmerman, who previously worked with World Renew in East and Southern Africa, joined the team again to serve as director of World Renew-Canada. With more than 30 years of experience in international development and organizational leadership, Timmerman has held various roles across Africa and Canada. His tenure includes 15 years in East and Southern Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi), where he led community-development programs focused on faith-based partnerships and sustainable change. He later worked with World Vision Canada, leading the support of their programs in 22 countries as their Africa regional director. And at Canadian Feed the Children, he served as vice president of programs, overseeing operations in five countries and expanding Indigenous programming in Canada. Timmerman's return to World Renew is a calling rooted in faith, he said: "I am a lifelong member of the Christian Reformed Church and an active pastoral elder at New Life CRC in Guelph, Ontario. My goal is to offer leadership grounded in biblical truth, compassion, and a commitment to justice and mercy."

Timmerman serves alongside Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S., upholding the values of World Renew: faith, effectiveness, stewardship, and people flourishing. Bremer-Bennett has served for eleven years in her role with World Renew. She is born to the To'aheedliinii (Waters Flow Together) Clan and born for the Todich'iinii (Bitter Water) Clan of the Navajo Nation. Bremer-Bennett is an educator by training, with a B.A. from Calvin College and M.A. from Western New Mexico University. Her extensive experience in Christian ministry spans more than 30 years of organizational leadership, leadership development, and administration. Carol believes in the power of community and shares her passion and gifts with her church and international organizations. She has served on multiple boards, including those of Calvin University, the Christian Alliance for Inclusive Development, Integral Alliance, and Growing Hope Globally.

#### **V. Board matters**

The World Renew Board of Delegates is a key support of World Renew's ministry. The board's primary function is to set the vision and mission of World Renew and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

World Renew's governance structure is made up of delegates from each CRC classis, in addition to members at large, who together constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew.

The delegates are a vital communication link with CRC classes and churches. They select member national governing boards, with seven to nine members on the U.S. board and up to ten members on the Canadian board. The two boards together form the Joint Ministry Council (JMC), which provides governance for World Renew as a whole.

#### *Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada*

Jeff Adams, president; Calgary, Alberta  
Harry Bergshoeff, vice president; Burlington, Ontario  
Marg Hoogland, secretary; Lacombe, Alberta  
Darryl Beck, treasurer; Grimsby, Ontario  
Gordon Van Vliet, legal advisor; Calgary, Alberta  
Cari Fydirchuk, pastoral advisor; Cochrane, Alberta

#### *Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.*

Jeffrey Banaszak, president; Holland, Michigan  
Graham Seel, vice president; Concord, California  
Kenneth Macbain, treasurer; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Beverly Abma, secretary; Grandville, Michigan  
Bonny Mulder-Behnia, pastoral advisor; Bellflower, California  
Charles Udeh, member at large; Kentwood, Michigan  
Don Hansum, member at large; Parker, Colorado  
Kimberly Starkenburg, member at large; Orange City, Iowa  
Emily Boldenow-Fortna, member at large; Uxbridge, Massachusetts

Information on new board members, reappointments, and term completions will be provided after the annual general meeting of World Renew.

## **VI. Financial matters**

### *Salary disclosure*

In accord with synod's mandate to report executive salary levels, World Renew reports the following:

<i>Job level</i>	<i>Number of positions</i>	<i>Number below target</i>	<i>Number at target</i>
E1	2	0	2
E2	1	0	1
E3	4	0	4

## **VII. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Jeff Banaszak, president of World Renew-U.S.; Jeffrey Adams, president of World Renew-Canada; Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S.; and Peter Timmerman, director of World Renew-Canada, when World Renew matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

World Renew  
Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.  
Peter Timmerman, director, World Renew-Canada