



Christian
Reformed
Church

Reports of Ministries and Educational Institutions **2020**



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Christian
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Dear Christian Reformed Church member,

What an unusual year 2020 has turned out to be. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our lives in unprecedented ways. For the first time in the more than 160-year history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, we even had to cancel synod. Our denomination has been affected in many other ways as well. Our churches were forced to close their buildings for many weeks and find new ways to worship at home and online. Schools moved to online learning. Food banks and community outreach programs had to learn new rules about handwashing, wearing facemasks, and physical distancing.

Through all of this, however, we have continued to be the church. I have been so impressed by the ways congregations across North America have adapted to their local challenges and found new ways to be the church to their members, neighbors, and the global community. The Christian Reformed Church has not lost sight of what God has called us to do and be. Thank you.

The following pages include reports from the various ministries and educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. They were written with the intention of informing delegates to Synod 2020 about the work that has taken place in the past year. While Synod 2020 did not happen, we believe that these reports still have significant value—additional evidence of how God is blessing the ministry of the CRC! I hope that you will take some time to read the enclosed and appreciate all of the good work we are doing together as a denomination.

May God continue to bless you and your local congregation as you serve him in the year ahead.

Colin P. Watson, Sr.
Executive Director of the CRCNA

Calvin University**I. Introduction**

Calvin University's guiding mission is to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

What began nearly 150 years ago in a single classroom on Williams Street in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, with one faculty member, one academic discipline, and just seven students, is now a university sprawled across a 400-acre campus, offering more than 100 academic options to 3,700 students each year. It's an institution of 250 Christ-centered faculty who are leaders in their fields. And it includes an alumni network of more than 65,000 who are expressing Calvin's mission around the world.

By becoming a university (in July 2019), Calvin is expanding its global influence, growing as a trusted partner for learning, and deepening its commitment to the Reformed Christian faith.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Calvin University equips its more than 3,700 students from 45 U.S. states, 65 countries, and five Canadian provinces to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. Calvin is proud to offer 100+ majors and programs, including graduate-level offerings in accounting, education, and speech pathology and audiology. Calvin also promotes Christian thought and action on an international stage in key areas of education and culture through its 12 centers and institutes.

Calvin students engage in intensive internships, community-based service learning, and significant research that results in publishing and presenting alongside world-class faculty.

Calvin University partners with the CRCNA in living out the denomination's five ministry priorities.

A. Faith formation

- The 2019 campus-wide Bible study incorporated the public reading of Scripture. Calvin community members met weekly to open with prayer, listen to Scripture, have a guided conversation about it, and pray for direction and provision in the week ahead.
- In conjunction with the Bible study, Calvin partnered with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to offer a free subscription to the *Dwell* app so that members of the Calvin community could listen to Scripture, taking on the challenge to listen to the entire New Testament over the semester.
- Upperclass students serve as discipleship assistants to oversee Christian formation in the residence halls, serving with Barnabas program student leaders who serve on each floor.

B. Servant leadership

- The unique Calvin LifeWork program continues to prepare students for servant leadership in work and life after earning their university degree.

- Service-learning spring break trips allow students to practice slowing down, looking others in the eyes, and learning from God and the people they meet, serve, and are served by.
- Community Partnership Coordinators facilitate residence hall partnerships with local organizations for ongoing service-learning opportunities.

C. *Global mission*

- Calvin University is an intentionally global community, from the student body to faculty and staff to alumni.
- Calvin’s global pursuits are exemplified through centers and institutes and special projects, including the Clean Water Institute of Calvin University, the Nagel Institute, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, the Faith and International Development Conference (international studies), the Umm el-Jimal project (archaeology), and the university’s close partnership with the International Network for Christian Higher Education.

D. *Mercy and justice*

- Calvin University partners with World Vision every year through LOFT (Living Our Faith Together) to recruit runners for the Grand Rapids half-marathon to raise money for clean water.
- Plaster Creek Stewards (PCS) is dedicated to returning health and beauty to one of the most contaminated urban waterways in West Michigan. Now in its tenth year, PCS has involved students, staff, faculty, community members, and partners in education, research, and many different on-the-ground restoration efforts. In 2019 the Urban Waters Learning Network, Groundwork USA, River Network, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency awarded PCS the Learning Network Signature Award.
- The Calvin Prison Initiative continues to provide a Christian liberal arts education to inmates at the Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan. This five-year program results in a bachelor of arts degree from Calvin University in Faith and Community Leadership.

E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

- In April 2019, Calvin welcomed teachers and students from Zuni Christian School as worship leaders in chapel.
- In fall 2019, Calvin had 59 people involved on six worship leadership teams. Ten percent of those on worship teams are AHANA (Asian, Hispanic/ Latino, African, and Native American) students, and 27 percent are international students.
- New pastoral partners serve alongside chaplains to connect the university more deeply with local churches, and to offer preaching and pastoral care support on campus.

III. **Academic initiatives**

At Calvin, academic pursuits reveal truth and knowledge about the world God created. The following details select developments since the university’s previous report to synod:

- We are grateful that *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Calvin University as number 3 overall among Midwest regional universities in its 2020 *Best Colleges Guidebook*. (In previous years, Calvin was ranked in the Midwest regional colleges category.) In addition to this ranking, Calvin also placed as number 5 among Midwest regional universities on *U.S. News’s* “Best Undergraduate Teaching” list, number 18 on its “Best Value Schools” list, and number 3 for total percentage of international students.
- Two Calvin students have been named Goldwater Scholars for 2019–20. Calvin has been a national leader in producing Goldwater Scholars. Since 2009, 20 Calvin students have been recognized as Goldwater Scholars, and 14 have received honorable mention. Student and faculty research at Calvin generates more than 125 publications annually.
- In January 2019, Calvin’s Entrada Scholars Program became the third recipient of the Dr. Clifton Rhodes, Jr. Community Recognition Award, conferred annually by the Baptist Fellowship of Grand Rapids to organizations whose work improves the quality of life of African Americans in Grand Rapids. The Entrada Scholars Program invites high school students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds to experience the Calvin community through a month of living and learning on campus in the summer. While on campus, students take a class, have access to academic coaching, and engage in a number of community activities with their peers, including service projects.
- Calvin is one of only thirteen higher education institutions nationwide to be awarded a Beckman Scholars Program in 2019. The prestigious and exclusive award is given by the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, recognizing institutions that excel at providing undergraduate research opportunities for students. Calvin has received the award twice before—in 2008 and 2014—with a total of eight Calvin students previously being selected as Beckman Scholars. The 2019 award provides Calvin \$104,000 to fund four students in carrying out specialized, long-term research in chemistry or biology over the next three years.
- In October 2019 Calvin cohosted the Second Global Congress on Sport and Christianity, an ecumenical gathering of sports administrators, coaches, athletes, pastors, theologians, and others who seek to explore the mutual impact of belief and sport and want to effect a cultural shift in modern sport and the role it plays in a life of faith.

IV. Finances

Calvin University continues its pursuit of a sustainable financial model, using both natural and financial resources to pursue our mission and make a positive impact on our world. *Vision 2030* provides the following principles to guide our work:

- Embody a faithful and engaged Reformed Christianity.
- Grow student enrollment by diversifying academic offerings.
- Collaborate to enhance learning.
- Build spaces that inspire learning and promote community.

Thanks to generous donors, we were pleased to open the first Peet’s licensed coffee shop in Michigan on the main floor of the Hekman library.

This spot has become a hub of conversation, laughter, and community for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Due to a generous gift and much planning, we were able to renovate spaces at the renamed Calvin Ecosystem Preserve and Native Gardens, including adding new educational garden beds to share information about native plant species. Visitors will also be able to find the space more easily, thanks to a beautiful new sign visible from the East Beltline and more spacious visitor parking.

We have also continued our planning work on the Commons Union project. This new space will provide consolidated dining for our students in the center of campus, providing a “living room” space. It will also create spaces for welcoming alumni and guests, as well as employer partners via the Career Center space.

The following developments have increased institutional and financial efficiencies within and across departments:

- Purchase and implementation of Workday, a new enterprise resource planning software
- Transition to becoming Calvin University, along with new entry signage at the Burton Street entrance and at the other entrances across the campus
- Cross-divisional work to identify a partner in online education as we work to make a Calvin education accessible to new populations of students

Calvin is also working each year on infrastructure maintenance, including new donor-funded projects such as educational and functional improvements to the Design Hub, a maker space for collaborative teamwork by art, business, and engineering students—as well as others—in the lower level of the Spoelhof University Center. We are also excited about enhanced nursing labs, bringing new technology and learning tools to our nursing students.

Calvin’s outstanding debt is \$74.2 million as of December 31, 2019, and the university is reducing its principal each year through an amortization schedule.

Charitable contributions to Calvin continue to strengthen student learning. Donors have continued to provide financial support for student scholarships, centers, institutes, and our general endowment. As of June 30, 2019, the university’s endowment was \$177 million. These funds help keep Calvin affordable to students across all fields of study.

It is a pleasure to announce the appointment of Jim English as Calvin University’s new vice president for finance. Jim was appointed after a rigorous national search, which included diverse and highly qualified candidates. We share our deep gratitude for Sally Vander Ploeg’s devotion and service to Calvin in that role over many years.

Calvin University
Michael K. Le Roy, president

Faith Formation Ministries

“Helping churches grow faith for life”

I. Introduction

Synod 2015 launched Faith Formation Ministries as a new denominational initiative. We are now marking our fifth birthday as we seek to strengthen and expand our ministry within the CRCNA. Faith Formation Ministries encourages and equips local Christian Reformed ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their contexts. We seek to deepen church culture and to cultivate faith formative practices so that a resilient faith takes root and flourishes within the whole church. In pursuing this vision, we form partnerships with CRC pastors and ministry leaders (paid and volunteer) who are responsible for faith formation within their local contexts. We serve them by listening, by developing relationships, by providing coaching and workshop facilitation, and by curating and creating adaptable resources to design and build a framework for lifelong faith formation that fits their respective settings.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

In his letter to the early Galatian churches, Paul describes being “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). This embodied longing expresses the underlying motivation within Faith Formation Ministries. Our deep desire for the CRCNA—and indeed for all people—is that Jesus Christ is formed within us. As 1 John 2:6 teaches us, this formation is evident when we “live as Jesus did.”

Following Jesus Christ until his character and his ways become our character and way of life is both a gift to receive and a calling to embrace. Our faith is a gift that the triune God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Fulfiller, grows within us. Our faith is also a calling that God invites us to embrace so that every area of our lives is shaped and formed by God’s grace extended to us in Jesus Christ.

We are convinced that the faith God is growing within us is intergenerational (we grow best in community), life-broad (emerges in every area of our lives), and lifelong (we are called to grow continually in Jesus Christ from cradle to grave). In short, Faith Formation Ministries helps churches grow faith for life.

A. Vision implementation

During the past year we have specifically engaged this vision by doing the following:

1. Facilitating more than 80 workshops and leading other retreats and gatherings for church ministry teams, councils, pastors, and classis leaders.
2. Coordinating our fourth cohort of churches (this time on family faith formation) and launching a new regional-based cohort in southern Ontario to encourage mentoring with youth and emerging adults.
3. Developing and releasing new resources, such as *Everyday Family Faith* (both English and Korean editions) and *Dear Parent*, to support faith formation in the home, recognizing that collaborative efforts between church

and home serve to encourage an immersive and more holistic approach to faith formation.

4. Giving attention to the *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum, including launching *Dwell Digital*, creating an online community for *Dwell* users, expanding the number of churches utilizing the *Dwell* curriculum, and taking the first steps in a refresh of the curriculum.
5. Developing and equipping a classis-based network of youth ministry champions, who support and encourage youth ministry in the congregations of their classes.
6. Piloting a partnership with Sioux Center Christian School to explore ways in which Christian schools can encourage and resource parents to create consistent faith-forming language, principles, and practices between home and school.

B. What we are hearing from churches and ministry leaders

Our first priority in our work is to listen well to the ministry leaders and pastors with whom we interact. This posture has also helped us discern priorities for training and resource development that will best serve churches. As in previous years, we continue to hear a desire

- for more resources related to children and youth ministry, especially connected to the creeds and confessions.
- to learn how to do intergenerational ministry well, particularly with engaging emerging adults in the whole life of the church and with equipping families for faith formation in the home.
- to assist members 55 years old and older to navigate the faith-related questions that surface during this “third third” of life.

Additionally, ministry leaders have expressed desires for

- resources to be made available in multiple languages, particularly Spanish and Korean.
- new and expanded resources for catechism teaching.
- navigating faith formation opportunities and challenges within rural, urban, and multiethnic contexts.
- faith formation resources that are experiential and make wider use of current technologies and communication tools.
- resources to equip deacons, elders, and pastors for their own faith formation as they serve in leadership roles within our churches.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

Reflecting on 1 John 2:6, we desire that our faith formation efforts will lead to more and more people living as Jesus did in grateful response to the mercy and love God has lavished on us in Jesus Christ.

A. Faith Formation convictions

Our convictions about faith formation lead us to focus on a more transformational approach to serving churches and ministry leaders. As we have noted in previous years, we have learned that:

1. It is easy to become busy with ministry activity. Discerning what ministry efforts will truly bear kingdom fruit often requires a deliberate process of reflection and dialogue.
2. We can coordinate inspirational events and resources fairly easily. However, a commitment to transformational relationships and experiences requires a steadfast listening posture over periods of time.
3. There are quite a few faith formation concepts and terms that can sound unfamiliar to people in CRC congregations and their wider communities. We have an ongoing task to make the language, framework, and resources for faith formation accessible and relevant to the everyday life of people in our congregations.

B. Faith Formation connections

With these learnings in mind, we seek to connect with churches in the following ways:

1. We seek to form long-term relationships with church leaders, listening to them, resourcing them, following up with them, encouraging them.
2. We engage with classis meetings and other leadership gatherings to introduce our resources, facilitate mini-workshops, and—upon request—lead longer workshops on topics related to faith formation. These gatherings also serve as opportunities for multiple informal conversations with church leaders.
3. We offer workshops on a wide variety of topics for council and church leadership retreats, structuring them with the capacity to form long-term “after the workshop” relationships with those who attend.
4. We post regularly on The Network and elsewhere to share stories of transformation, to highlight beneficial resources and best practices, and to make the terms and concepts of faith formation more familiar and accessible.
5. We facilitate year-long cohorts for churches to dive into specific faith formation concepts and practices.
6. We curate and create resources to address a wide range of faith formation topics, often in collaboration with other ministry teams.
7. We engage with leaders from other ministries and denominations to continue learning how other Christian communities are navigating challenges and opportunities related to faith formation.

Faith Formation Ministries
Christopher J. Schoon, director

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

I. Introduction

For over 100 years the CRCNA has become increasingly invested in chaplains. In 1917, Rev. Leonard Trap became the first CRC chaplain as a volunteer in the U.S. Army. Since then, the CRCNA has called 337 chaplains to serve in the military, hospitals, prisons, hospices, workplaces, and other institutions. The denomination supports this work through Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (CCM), which provides endorsement, training, and advocacy for chaplains in their various ministries.

Chaplaincy has grown particularly fast recently, as the number of endorsed chaplains has increased by 25 percent in just the past five years. Today the CRCNA endorses 144 active chaplains who minister to an estimated 2 million individuals each year. This growth is projected to continue in the coming years in light of a growing number of people pursuing careers in chaplaincy and an increased need for chaplains and other spiritual care providers in institutions and communities throughout North America.

A. *Mandate*—“Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional and specialized settings” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 685).

B. *Mission*—Chaplaincy and Care Ministry’s mission, overseen by the Council of Delegates, is to implement, regulate, and develop the denomination’s commitment to chaplaincy. We carry out this mission in the following ways:

- overseeing the denominational endorsement process for chaplains
- providing pastoral support and advocacy for endorsed chaplains
- facilitating shared supervision with chaplains’ calling churches
- informing and educating the CRCNA on chaplaincy and related ministries
- administering training grants
- recruiting chaplains
- conducting training
- promoting the development of chaplaincy
- participating in national endorsement-related organizations

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. *Servant leadership*

CCM has seen a large increase in the number of people inquiring about chaplaincy, specialized training, and endorsement. In the past five years the number of inquiring individuals has more than tripled. In 2019, CCM encouraged this through six college and seminary visits, personal meetings with 42 individuals, and interactions with 180 others who were interested in chaplaincy. Through these connections, CCM guides individuals as they apply for endorsement, complete specialized training, and connect with others working in their field of interest. Interested individuals represent a diversity of backgrounds, ministry experiences, and vocational goals.

Chaplain leaders are specially trained for their ministry. To work in clinical settings, chaplains complete a minimum of 800 hours of Clinical Pastoral Education or equivalent training. This is in addition to formal theological and biblical training, and it requires time and energy to acquire. CCM supports these new and future chaplains through a donor-driven development fund. In 2019, CCM granted \$30,613 in funds to 27 individuals for specialized training.

Through endorsement, chaplains are taking opportunities to become leaders in their communities. Thirty-seven CRC chaplains are board certified through several professional chaplaincy organizations; the certification process demonstrates their advanced skills and enables them to step into leadership and specialized roles in their workplaces. Four chaplains are clinical educators, training dozens of new chaplains annually. Fifteen military chaplains are field-grade officers who have significant responsibility leading others and advising their commanders in matters of spiritual wellness and moral responsibility. Many more serve in important roles on ethics committees, advising managers and advocating for peoples' needs on a large scale. Through the leadership of chaplains, the church has a significant influence in the communities and institutions around them.

B. Gospel proclamation and worship

Chaplains proclaim the gospel through their work with individuals every day. They enter into the lives of people in crisis, bringing the peace, healing, and grace of Christ to many whom the church cannot otherwise reach. This work is different from other forms of ministry, and it has unique challenges that can be isolating for chaplains. CCM addresses these challenges in three major ways: an annual conference, monthly video conference meetings, and meaningful individual interactions.

CCM supports chaplains by hosting an annual Chaplains Training conference. In 2019, 131 people attended this event. Several main speakers gave opportunities for further learning in specialized areas. Daily worship and breakout groups enabled chaplains to have fellowship and to share about their lives and ministry. In addition, Chaplains Training 2019 included a new session titled "Tools for Care," in which four CRC chaplains gave brief, TEDx-style presentations, dynamically presenting a tool, experience, or resource from their particular ministry. Chaplains can attend other conferences, but many choose to come to this one because it is deeply rooted in their faith tradition and community.

In addition to an annual gathering, chaplains benefit from connecting with one another on a regular basis. Since October, CCM has been hosting monthly video conference meetings. These hour-long meetings focus on unique topics relevant to various areas of chaplaincy ministry. Endorsed chaplains are invited to attend, share stories, trade resources, and offer encouragement to one another in their ministry. Over a three-month period, 32 different chaplains have attended a meeting, with seven people attending multiple times. Through these meetings, CRCNA chaplains are connecting across great distances, finding support and encouragement from each other.

While enabling chaplains to connect with one another, CCM provides individual support throughout the year. In 2019, Chaplaincy and Care totaled 2,835 distinct interactions with chaplains, including 384 meetings and visits

to individuals in Michigan, Ontario, Texas, Iowa, Alberta, Germany, and Italy. For further communication, CCM provides regular updates through a bimonthly newsletter, email conversations, and phone and video meetings. A closed Facebook group and the Network are used almost daily for posting resources, sharing stories, and providing encouragement. Through these ministry activities, CCM encourages chaplains to provide spiritual and emotional care in contextually appropriate ways to those whom God has entrusted to their care.

C. *Faith formation*

Chaplains serve throughout our communities, hospitals, prisons, long-term care facilities, and workplaces. Chaplains also serve in the military, hospice care, veterans administration, pastoral counseling, and more. These communities need chaplains for their ability to handle crises, have difficult yet meaningful conversations, and care for people from many different backgrounds.

Chaplains are trained to provide care to people in difficult situations. In a given day, a military chaplain may provide counseling to a soldier having suicidal thoughts. A hospital chaplain may care for someone who has just received a devastating diagnosis, helping them to process their purpose and trajectory in life. A pastoral counselor may help someone through a relationship crisis. A chaplain in a nursing home will regularly visit with dementia patients who feel as if the world has forgotten them. CRCNA chaplains touch the lives of around 5,500 individuals each day, meeting them in any situation they face. They help people struggling with dying, addiction, depression, stress, grief, and more. They are there when people need to ask hard questions about life and faith. They pray with people and direct them to helpful resources and faith communities. In these and many other ways chaplains embody Christ's grace in the world.

As North American communities become more secular, the presence of chaplains becomes more crucial. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, 29 percent of Canadians are increasingly becoming "religiously unaffiliated," and about half seldom or never go to church or other worship services. In the U.S., only 36 percent attend worship services once a week, and 30 percent attend only once a month to a few times a year. While fewer people are going to church, spiritual needs abound. People struggle to find meaning in a world that is constantly changing and filled with death, grief, and fear. Chaplains go beyond the walls of the church to meet people in spiritual crises, bringing them hope and offering the support of the church.

III. **Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

Chaplains connect with the church through calling, resources, and support. Local churches empower chaplains to serve in specialized settings. CCM facilitates the relationship between the chaplain and their calling church, enabling chaplains to get much needed support in their ministry and connecting churches with important spiritual resources. Through this relationship, the church can effectively extend their mission into unique areas of their surrounding community.

The CRCNA endorses 144 chaplains representing 107 individual CRC churches. Endorsement is an essential process for a denomination to ensure

that their chaplains have the training, experience, and skills to flourish in specialized ministries. CCM oversees the endorsement process, reviewing a prospective chaplain's life and ministry, and giving them the tools to ensure that they are ready for chaplaincy ministry. Endorsements are renewed every five years, ensuring that chaplains continue in their work and are sustained by their local churches.

CCM supports the relationship between the calling church and chaplain through a Covenant of Joint Supervision. This document, signed by the chaplain, church council, and the director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, demonstrates the church's commitment to support and supervise the chaplain's life and doctrine. The chaplain agrees to report regularly on their ministry and to participate in the church through pastoral care or leadership. CCM agrees to assist in the supervision of the chaplain while also providing specific resources, tools, and support for their ministry.

Beyond its work with local churches, CCM ensures that chaplains have a meaningful relationship with the denomination. Chaplains share their unique skills and experiences, providing greater depth into challenging topics such as death and dying, caring for the elderly, and facing addiction. The denomination's support is also crucial for chaplains to be successful in their ministry. Every November churches observe Chaplaincy and Care Sunday. On this day congregations recognize and support the work of chaplains in their community through education, prayer, and financial gifts to Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Chaplains are invited to preach and share about their work. It is a meaningful experience for everyone involved, and it reinforces chaplains' faith and passion for their ministry.

IV. Chaplaincy statistics

The Chaplaincy and Care Ministry Advisory Council and the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry present the following statistics:

1. Total CRCNA endorsed chaplains: 144 (full-time, 92; part-time, 41; endorsed and seeking employment, 11); in the United States, 120; in Canada, 24
2. Thirteen chaplains were newly endorsed in 2019: Abigail De Zeeuw, Steven Agler, Israel Alvaredo, Sea Ho, Chantal Huinink, Peter Janssens, Kenneth Krause, Derrick Lee, John Luth, Victor Perez-Ballesteros, Amie Spriensma, Paul Van Dyken, and Scott Van Voorst
3. The CRCNA supports 26 military chaplains: 14 on active duty in the United States; 2 on active duty in Canada; 4 in the US National Guard and Reserves; 1 in Civil Air Patrol; 5 military chaplain candidates
4. Eight chaplains retired in 2019: Douglas Einfeld, Carol Flietstra, Edward Hommes, Frederic Koning, Louis Korf, Barbara Schultze, Siemen Speelman, and Perrin Werner
5. In the past year military chaplains who have served or are currently serving overseas are Jon Averill, Richard Hill, David Jeltema, Joseph Kamp-huis, Lloyd Wicker, and Sang Joon (Tim) Won

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry
Sarah Roelofs, director

Pastor Church Resources

I. Introduction

Synod 1982 approved the formation of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR). Included in the original mandate were three key initiatives—namely, regional pastors within each classis, mentors for newly ordained CRC ministers of the Word, and pastoral relations committees in local congregations. The regional pastor and mentor initiatives continue to be key components of our work. The pastoral relations committees occasionally were helpful but generally proved problematic and thus are no longer promoted.

Synod 2016 approved a name change to Pastor Church Resources, reflecting the broad array of initiatives gathered in the ministry of PCR. It is worth noting that while the range of ways in which PCR seeks to accomplish its work has increased and developed, the original mandate continues to serve as an apt description of our work: PCR seeks to provide encouragement and support that fosters health and flourishing. It also attends to relationships that are strained and broken. As much as possible, our energy is directed toward the positive. Our vision/mission statement reads as follows: “Pastor Church Resources serves pastors, churches, and classes as they seek to promote healthy relationships, encourage one another in ministry, and discern next steps in seasons of growth, transition, or challenge.”

A review of PCR from its beginning in 1982 (and the history of the Ministerial Information Service, beginning in 1972) reveals a common thread: concern for the well-being of pastors and their families, concern for the well-being of congregations, and concern for the challenges that are intrinsic to the relationship of pastor and church. Synod has addressed these concerns in a variety of ways over the years by introducing the regional pastor program and the mentoring program, encouraging continuing education and sabbatical time for pastors, promoting pastor peer groups, reviewing the calling system, experimenting with pastor exchanges, introducing term calls, revising Church Order Articles 16 and 17, and encouraging the use of minister and church profiles and support for pastor-search committees to provide better “fit” capability. More recently, attention to the systemic health of classes and the resourcing of classis functionaries has been added, as well as the capacity for vocational assessments.

Our efforts are directed toward strengthening the health of pastors, congregational leaders, and the classis that surrounds them. All of this attention to the well-being of pastors and churches provides the context for the individual programs, personal interactions, and consultations that PCR staff undertake. While we often deal with situations of strain and brokenness, we do so as tenderly and truthfully as we can, trusting that the Spirit of God is at work ahead of us, with us, in us, and through us—and will continue to be at work after us. Our desire to resource pastors and churches so that they may flourish is an attempt to reflect our God, who resources the church with all the gifts necessary for flourishing.

Staffing notes: In January 2020, we were blessed to welcome Rev. Sean Baker to the PCR team. Sean serves as a ministry consultant. After serving the ministry of PCR for eleven years, Rev. Cecil van Niejenhuis anticipates retirement in June 2020. Cecil’s steady and wise pastoral leadership has been a rich blessing to the CRC.

II. Reflecting on our calling – servant leadership

In the desire of the CRCNA to see congregations flourish, the ministry of Pastor Church Resources plays a role in supporting, training, encouraging, and challenging congregational pastors and congregational leaders. This work occurs in a variety of ways and situations: through direct interactions with individual pastors and council leadership, systemically by way of interactions with classis functionaries, and with the encouragement of classis renewal. The typical entry point for engaging congregations—no matter what challenges may be under way—is by way of PCR’s work with those serving in leadership roles.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

A. *Ongoing ministry initiatives*

1. The staff of PCR respond to various questions and requests from congregational leaders. This includes **consultation/intervention** in times of difficulty or transition; we suggest resources when congregations are adding staff or considering a change in organizational structure, and we help with processes by which challenging congregational conversations can be planned and implemented. In 2019, PCR had interactions with 325 pastors, 130 congregations, and 25 classes. Much of this work is accomplished over the phone or through email, but PCR staff also work on-site with congregations and classes when circumstances warrant doing so. **Educational and retreat activities** for councils, congregations, classes, and church staff also continue to be a focus of PCR activity.
2. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with **persons entering ordained ministry**. Each year PCR hosts a dinner for graduates of the M.Div. program at Calvin Theological Seminary as well as for those enrolled in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). The work of PCR is explained, and relationships are initiated in a context of community.
3. On behalf of synod, Pastor Church Resources administers a **continuing education fund** for pastors and professional church staff. Grants of up to \$750 per year are awarded to pastors and staff who demonstrate the value of an educational event and/or opportunity they are pursuing.
4. **Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs)** are seasoned pastors trained to help congregations experiencing challenges during transitions between pastors, challenges related to conflict or to the impact of a lengthy tenure of an outgoing pastor. PCR endorses pastors for this ministry and supports them through the cultivation of peer learning groups, through annual training events, and through helping to connect them with churches seeking an STM. At this time, there are 25 STMs either endorsed by PCR or discerning whether the STM role is a good fit for them.
5. PCR maintains a list of **supply pastors**, most of whom are retired. Inclusion on this list is voluntary, and pastors desiring to be on this list can contact PCR. Supply pastors serve congregations for a limited time during periods of vacancy.

6. PCR *extends* its work through **regional pastors** at the classis level who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses (including commissioned pastors and spouses). Regional pastors also assist in setting up **mentoring relationships** for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple staff persons within a congregation. Regional pastors gather biennially for a conference of encouragement, support, and training. Our most recent conference was in November 2019.
7. PCR provides grants for **pastor peer groups** and biennial **conferences for pastors and pastors' wives**. Since peer group grants were launched in 2003, *just over 900 pastors* have participated in 319 groups. Our first-ever **pastors conference** was held in September 2019 in Calgary, Alberta. The next **pastors' wives conference** (male spouses have not shown interest in such events) is planned for October 2020 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
8. In the **pastor-search** process, PCR assists search teams in the basic procedures of calling a new pastor. The PCR training tool *More Than a Search Committee* is a recommended starting point, and it can be downloaded from the PCR webpage (crcna.org/pastor-church-resources) or ordered through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org). It provides guidance for the various steps of a healthy search process. **Minister profiles** are accessible to search teams through a special portal into the denominational database. There is some capacity for filtering, and PCR staff provide support in navigating the portal. **Church profiles** are posted on the Church Positions page of the Network, where pastors can review those materials with a degree of anonymity. PCR staff also support pastors during seasons of discernment.
9. **Vocational discernment**—Since 2016 a half-time vocational ministry consultant has worked with ministry leaders. A primary tool that is utilized is the *Birkman Assessment*. More than 300 pastors and ministry leaders have engaged in the Birkman process through Pastor Church Resources. In conjunction with Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) over 600 ministry leaders, pastors, and students have engaged in the Birkman process. Since the fall of 2017 the assessment is required for every incoming M.Div. or M.A. student entering CTS. Through PCR's Thriving Together Program the Birkman process is offered to every regional pastor. The benefits are vast: increased levels of self-awareness, the equipping of individuals to communicate their needs, and raised levels of job satisfaction. The process includes a one-on-one debrief with a certified consultant with the option of ongoing coaching and/or the exploration of team dynamics.
10. **Training tools** developed by PCR and related ministries include *More Than a Search Committee*, *Evaluation Essentials*, and *Effective Leadership in the Church*. The second edition of *More than a Search Committee* was made available in the spring. Congregations can access all of these materials by downloading them at the PCR website (crcna.org/pcr) or by ordering printed copies through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org). PCR has also developed a one-page tool titled "Resilience to Risk" for congregational self-reflection. Drawing on recurring patterns that emerge in congregational consultation, this tool can help to forewarn congregational

leaders when their church is trending toward risky conditions—such as difficulties in the pastor / congregation relationship. Becoming aware of such trends can prompt earlier and more effective responses.

11. **Healthy Church Discernment Process**—For eleven years now the Healthy Church Discernment Process (formerly known as the Healthy Church Initiative) has brought the gift of conversation about congregational health to the churches of the CRC. This discernment process has been developed within the CRC and is marked by prayerful attentiveness to God and attentiveness to the congregation’s voice through a congregational survey and continual conversation. Aided by trained coaches, congregations develop at least one major initiative that is designed to set the stage for the ongoing deepening of congregational health. An executive version of the congregational survey is also being used by a number of classes in a church visiting format.
12. **Continuing Education**—Grants are available for pastors and ministry staff to engage in learning opportunities that enhance their work in the local congregation. Over the past year 35 grants have been awarded for education on topics such as preaching, homeless ministry, church planting, clinical pastoral education, youth ministry, spiritual formation / direction, and pastoral care. In the summer of 2019 the Continuing Education Committee (created at the request of Synod 2016) was dissolved. Its tasks will be taken up by the new Pastoral Formation Advisory Team. The team will provide input for PCR’s overall ministry of supporting the ongoing, career-long formation of pastors beyond their ordination. This includes attention to continuing education of various kinds and support for personal and professional health and well-being by way of conferences and peer group support.
13. **Classis Renewal**—The ongoing work of classis renewal continues to encompass two broad categories: direct engagement and supportive infrastructure. Regarding direct engagement, PCR has given varying levels of coaching and consultation support to a variety of classes in the past year. We recently started a church visitor cohort, which began with an in-person gathering in Detroit, Michigan. Regarding supportive infrastructure, we have been working collaboratively with various ministries to ensure that classes are receiving the support they need. This includes participation in the current church planting initiative endorsed by the COD. The work of strengthening support for other classis functionaries, as related to the “Better Together” initiative, is also ongoing.

B. Special ministry initiative projects

1. Thriving Together program

Thriving Together is in its second year of a five-year program. It is funded through a nearly \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The overall purpose of this program is to create a stronger, more vital culture of mentoring around three undersupported, almost “invisible” transition moments experienced by pastors: early in a second call, late in career, and while privately wrestling with the question “Should I stay or go?” Through gatherings, resourcing, assessments, and developing mentoring

relationships, the Thriving Together initiative crystallizes a trajectory already taking shape in the CRC, sharpening the focus on pastoral relationships. In 2019 we hosted multiple gatherings for pastors in transition and have approved the funding for multiple peer-mentoring groups.

2. Connections project

In mid-2019, the initial Connections project wrapped up its 3.5-year plan of focusing on the regional resourcing of congregations in twelve classes within three regions (southern Ontario, the U.S. Midwest, and southern California). During the project, staff members connected with 545 churches and/or ministry leaders. In July 2019 the Connections II project began. This new five-year project will build on what has taken place to date as it engages all 49 classes of the CRCNA. It will focus on equipping congregations by synergizing regional networks made up of the existing personnel of ministries such as Resonate Global Mission, Faith Formation Ministries, and others. Connections II is leading a significant shift in how the denomination supports and resources its congregations. Funding for both Connections projects has been provided by grants from Lilly Endowment Inc.

3. Council/elder/deacon training

Our work to develop focused support for church councils continues. This focus began in 2018 with a goal to bring much-needed help to elders and deacons across our denomination. We are developing a bank of resources that we call the Leading Together Toolkit as well as a curriculum for beginning officebearers. We are aided by a small team of elders and deacons from a diversity of churches in the CRC.

IV. Conclusion

Over the past few years, PCR's work has focused as much as possible on being proactive in working toward the well-being of pastors and churches. Synod 2012 asked PCR to develop ways in which it could get involved "more quickly in situations where tensions are developing within a congregation" (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 755). The "Better Together" initiative (2013-2015) was a first significant step. The recommendations from that report continue to be implemented by both PCR and Classis Renewal. In 2015, after a two-year pilot project, Vocational Ministry Assessments became available for pastors. Almost two years were spent on the Spiritual Vitality for Pastors Project (2015-2017) resulting in the *Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit*. (This has been translated into Korean and Spanish.) A Flourishing in Ministry Study began in summer 2017 and will continue for some years to come. The Thriving Together program builds on the recognized importance of creating space for pastors to be in relationships with colleagues, particularly in the disruptions that transitions can bring. Learnings from the ongoing data will be key to PCR's work with pastors and congregations and the request made by Synod 2012.

There is no formula to ensure pastoral health or congregational health; no formula can protect against strains and stresses in relationships. We encourage healthy practices such as spiritual disciplines, Sabbath-keeping, and ongoing conversations between pastors and church councils that are both gracious and candid.

Most of all, we encourage a spirit of hospitableness, in which pastors seek the flourishing of a congregation, and congregations seek the flourishing of a pastor. To have the best interests of the other in view, and then to use available resources for the well-being of the other, makes for a way of being church together that reflects the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This requires a posture of graciousness, a commitment to prayerful support and encouragement, and a willingness to be both honest and kind.

Church communities that evidence the capacity to receive each other with thanks, and to be enriched by the challenge and reality of differences—these are church communities that are full of truth and grace, bearing witness to the reconciling work of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Church Resources

Lis Van Harten, codirector

Cecil van Niejenhuis, codirector

Raise Up Global Ministries

I. Introduction

Raise Up Global Ministries is the coming together of three programs that reflect the heart and gifts of Christian Reformed leaders. Using the Word of God, we (1) resource Word-centered small groups for evangelism and discipleship, (2) prepare global pastors to be shepherds to care for God's people and teach the Christian faith, and (3) equip Christian teachers with training that centers on a Christian worldview. Sam Huizenga started as the new director for Raise Up in April 2019.

A. *Coffee Break/Discover Your Bible*

1. Where we are

Coffee Break (CB) began in 1970 in Peace CRC in South Holland, Illinois, as a way to introduce people to Jesus. It emphasized using the Word in the context of a safe, small group environment using Discover Your Bible (DYB) study materials. Alvin Vander Griend introduced the phrase "The Word does the work." Today the CB team summarizes the ministry this way: "Joining with God, the CB/DYB team serves churches and small group leaders around the world with vision, training, and resources for relational, small group Bible discovery in order that people come to faith in Christ and together grow in him." Teo Han, currently serving as the Korean CB representative, came to know Christ in a men's CB group. He says, "Coffee Break was a safe place to learn and ask questions."

We are revitalizing a well-loved program that has proven to be effective. CB has a unique opportunity to resource the global church and immigrant churches of North America. As one pastor noted, "Coffee Break does all three aspects of our mission [to love God and each other, and to serve the world], which is unique among ministries."

2. Going forward

Coffee Break begins 2020 celebrating 50 years. One celebration took place in Korea with 350 CB leaders. Standing at this 50-year mark, we sense there is a great need for prayer-centered, relational small-group Bible discovery for evangelism and discipleship. To respond to that need, we will

- hire a new program director to support and grow Coffee Break.
- hire a content coordinator to develop and revise studies.
- increase access to training and coaching through launching an interactive online learning space for leaders from around the world.
- develop more workshop leaders/coaches in hubs around North America.

B. *Timothy Leadership Training*

1. Where we are

Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) began in the 1990s in Africa and has grown to develop a set of seven manuals to train Christian pastors and lay leaders worldwide. It is action-oriented learning designed to develop church leaders and transform communities. The Raise Up director

saw TLT in action as she attended a Malawi TLT graduation of 102 trainers in October 2019. She also visited a fish farm and vegetable garden in Zambia. Inspired by his TLT training, the local owner, Peter, built these to feed and employ his vulnerable neighbors. Through TLT, Peter learned that God cares for all people and had given him the resources to help his neighbors experience God's love by eating good fish and vegetables. In the past year as well, Luis Pellecer was added to the TLT team to further develop relationships in Latin America.

2. Going forward

Currently, by God's grace, TLT is being used in over 30 countries and provides manuals in over 38 languages, working through partnerships with churches and ministry organizations. Meeting the needs of the global church, we are writing a new manual to address the crucial issue of spiritual powers. Initial field-testing will begin in May 2020. In light of the conditions of ministry in challenging areas, TLT is focusing on trainers' care. This began with an initial trainers' retreat held in India in 2019. Two more are scheduled: in Guatemala in 2020 and another (location to be determined) in 2021. The purpose of these retreats is to encourage trainers and to spur multiplication. TLT is developing a WhatsApp network to encourage and learn from international pastors.

C. Educational Care

1. Where we are

Educational Care (EC) developed from Synod 2005's mandate to study the "relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church's work of world missions" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 773). Eighty-one educators have completed six manuals and are equipped to train others. EC has been used in 24 countries in 10 languages. Al Perse-naire, former EC program manager, retired in October 2019. Raise Up formed an EC Interim Leadership Team of twelve representatives from EduDeo, Christian Schools International, the VanLunen Center, and EC practitioners from North America, Asia, and Africa. Work continues. Steve Timmermans, CRCNA executive director, led an EC in-service training for teachers in Ethiopia. They hope to use EC in hundreds of schools across Ethiopia. Other trainings continue in many African countries and in lands where Christians face opposition to the gospel.

2. Going forward

Looking to the needs of the global and future Christian community, we will improve the curriculum and training process guided by wisdom from the experienced interim team. We will add new partners, richly informed by TLT and CB's partnership models. New funding strategies will be developed with the fresh eyes and collaboration of the interim team. A new program manager will be hired in ministry year 2020/2021 to continue moving this program forward in God's strength.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Raise Up Global Ministries joins with God to develop servant leaders in churches and schools through nonformal facilitated learning and materials. Raise Up equips leaders through partnership with churches in the CRC

and in many other denominations across North America. Globally, Raise Up works through local partnerships. For example, Theological Education Extension of Zambia utilizes TLT to develop church leaders in Zambia. The CRC of the Philippines equips churches with Coffee Break training and materials. Several Resonate missionaries use EC as a means of serving communities in Africa and Asia. Raise Up remains guided by the following values: biblically grounded, gospel driven, Spirit led, relationally focused, accessibly delivered, contextually appropriate, transformationally oriented, reciprocal ministry.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

God is growing the global church, and Raise Up is a vessel to support churches locally and internationally. Coffee Break and Timothy Leadership Training directly resource the church and its mission by equipping leaders with training and materials. Educational Care equips Christian educators in the church and in the school to teach children. The Christian worldview flows from the church to the teacher and to the student, home, and community.

Raise Up is Spirit led, as facilitated learning around the Word with a group always involves the Spirit—with “one ear on the Spirit and one ear on the group.” Each training group is holy ground: the very Spirit of God orchestrates faith, growth, and transformation as servant leaders humbly gather around God’s Word to discover together what God desires for his church.

Raise Up Global Ministries
Sam Huizenga, director

Back to God Ministries International**I. Introduction—Mission and Mandate**

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) serves as the worldwide media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. With ten indigenous ministry teams that reach nearly every country in our world, BTGMI looks much different than when it launched as an English radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, in 1939. Still, over 80 years later, BTGMI has the same three goals it had in its original mandate: proclaim the gospel, disciple believers in their faith, and strengthen the church. BTGMI thanks you, as members and leaders in the Christian Reformed Church, for your partnership in making this possible.

The mission of Back to God Ministries International is to share the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen local churches worldwide through our six core strategies:

1. As an agency of the CRCNA mandated to communicate the gospel within and across diverse cultures, we commit to developing and practicing the principle of contextualization. What we say will be clearly and efficiently communicated in the cultural context in ways that ensure that the gospel is truly heard.
2. As an agency charged by the CRCNA to serve the church, we commit to affirming, strengthening, connecting to, and working with and through local gatherings of Christ's body and denominations—to see churches as both sending and receiving, serving and being served.
3. Because we are a witness to the unity of Christ's body, and because we value stewardship of resources, we commit to working in a variety of partnerships with like-minded organizations wherever and however that serves to build capacity, sustainability, and efficient use of resources.
4. We are stewards of God's good gifts, including the gifts of partner organizations and gifts entrusted directly to us. We commit to prayerful, thoughtful, wise allocation of resources, appropriate financial practices, and faithful assessment of both internal and external systems of programs.
5. We commit to creating an excellent staff that stresses participation and development. Our preferred way of working together is in teams where issues can be explored safely and thoroughly, in which decisions are clear and their follow-up is effective. Team leaders are held responsible for processes that ensure effective, efficient, decisions and accountability in follow-up with high morale.
6. We commit to pray together—that God will be glorified through our work, that we may faithfully discern and follow the Spirit's leading, that we may be empowered by the Spirit's presence in our organization and in our lives, and that God's kingdom may come on earth as in heaven.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

The main focus of Back to God Ministries International is global mission. All of our work is guided by the words of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Naturally, though, much of our work also falls under other parts of the CRCNA's fivefold calling as we seek to work alongside churches and ministries worldwide.

A. *Global mission*

BTGMI carries out ministry in ten major world languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Using media, BTGMI is uniquely positioned to provide gospel outreach in nearly every country of the world, even in places where Christian missionaries are not allowed. By proclaiming the gospel through radio, television, Internet, mobile apps, and social media, we are able to reach people who may not otherwise have access to a community of believers or a safe way to ask life's difficult questions. We regularly receive responses from people around the world who testify that they heard about Jesus for the first time through the media resources produced by BTGMI.

1. BTGMI employs about 150 indigenous staff members working around the world. BTGMI has a ministry presence in 55 countries through production and discipleship centers, broadcast locations, and resource distribution. In addition, BTGMI reaches people in nearly every country through Internet and mobile app resources.
2. BTGMI's international ministry teams have developed 29 ministry websites in 10 languages supported by 67 social media sites. BTGMI produces 54 radio/audio programs and 24 TV/video programs.
3. We distribute more than one million printed devotional booklets each year in five languages. In general, the number of print daily devotional guides has decreased as we are able to reach more people in more places digitally through email, Facebook, and smartphone apps. More than three million people globally receive our digital devotions—and this number increases every day.
4. A network of more than 6,500 prayer partners in North America and throughout the world pray regularly for people who respond to our media outreach.
5. BTGMI global outreach is strengthened through crucial networks of North American and international partners. Strong collaborations create effective partnerships for mission and allow resources to be invested wisely. In addition to collaborations within the CRCNA, BTGMI works cooperatively with the following Reformed denominations worldwide:

Reformed Church in America, Reformed Church in Japan, Presbyterian Church of Brazil, National Presbyterian Church in Mexico, Indonesian Christian Church, and Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile. In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe, Africa, and India and surrounding countries, and with house churches and Christian ministries in China.

B. Faith formation on the global mission field

BTGMI provides faith formation resources in the English language, primarily for North American audiences, under the name ReFrame Media. To learn more about those resources, see section III (Connecting with churches) below or visit ReFrameMedia.com.

Culturally relevant discipleship resources are also available in the other nine major languages in which BTGMI works. Produced and distributed in print, online, via social media channels, and through smartphone apps, devotions and faith formation resources are bringing God's Word to people around the world.

1. Audio and video programs apply God's Word directly to people's lives through Bible teaching programs that offer Reformed, biblical perspectives on current cultural issues within the context of the nations in which we do ministry.

In China, BTGMI recently began using a new "check-in" feature on our online devotional platform. Lan uses this feature to "check in" to her daily devotions app for the sake of accountability and to grow her sense of community with other readers. "I have often been very encouraged by things my brothers and sisters in this group have shared, especially when I have been particularly down," she writes.

2. BTGMI offers print resources including devotions in nearly every language ministry. In total, BTGMI mails or hands out about 2.1 million devotional guides and other gospel-centered material every year. Much of this content is also available online. In all of our ten language ministries, we regularly hear from people who are grateful to receive meaningful reflections on God's Word.

For example, a man named Heykel sent a message from Cuba on behalf of his family: "Thank you for the wonderful work you are doing, which comes to us in one of our greatest times of need. Your daily devotions nourish us every morning. I've kept every booklet that you've sent and share them with others. God bless you in your work."

3. In 2018, BTGMI began working with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt Synod of the Nile (EPCE) and Words of Hope, the media ministry associated with the Reformed Church in America, to expand ministry around the Arabic-speaking world. In 2019 the EPCE appointed Martin Nathan as the leader for this ministry, and BTGMI and EPCE worked together to develop a ministry website, appoint staff, and distribute print copies of the devotional book *Seeking God's Face*.
4. In Haiti nearly 343 new believers enrolled in our Bible study by correspondence course in 2019.

C. Servant leadership on the global mission field

Back to God Ministries International is blessed to work with indigenous leaders gifted in both ministry and media. These leaders and their teams provide culturally relevant outreach in each of our ten language ministries.

1. International ministry leaders include Pastor Martin Nathan (Arabic); Pastor Jerry An (Chinese); Robin Basselin and Justin Sterenberg (English codirectors); Rev. Masao Yamashita (Japanese); Rev. Arliyanus Larosa

(Indonesian); Rev. Hernandes Lopes (Portuguese); Rev. Sergei Sosedkin (Russian); and Rev. Huascar de la Cruz (Spanish). French ministry coordinators include Rev. Marc Nabie in Burkina Faso, Rev. Jacky Chéry in Haiti, and Rabo Godi in Niger.

Several of these leaders are new to these positions since last year, and these transitions bring on a time of celebrating and thanking God for years of service and looking to him for guidance in the future.

- a. Rev. Larosa's appointment comes after five years of searching and discernment from the board of our partner ministry in Indonesia, YKB. Rev. Larosa brings a wealth of pastoral, media, and administrative experience and has already implemented new programs that we pray will bring the ministry forward.
 - b. The appointment of Robin Basselin and Justin Sterenberg as English-ministry codirectors came in Fall 2019. At that time, Rev. Steven Koster stepped down after thirteen years of building the six ReFrame programs currently in place.
 - c. Rev. Huascar de la Cruz became the Spanish media ministry leader at the end of October 2019. Rev. Guillermo Serrano, our Spanish ministry leader for almost thirty years, stepped back from full-time service. Rev. de la Cruz is working to develop a new Spanish-language ministry partnership with the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico.
2. Pastor Jerry An facilitates symposia for church leaders in both Asia and North America to promote the use of media for gospel outreach.
 3. The goal of all BTGMI-related training events is to equip leaders for sharing the gospel in the context to which God has called them. A few additional international leadership training events included the following:
 - a. French ministry leader Rev. Marc Nabie expanded Timothy Leadership Training Institute events in several West African nations.
 - b. In India and nearby countries, BTGMI's Hindi ministry leader conducted training events for pastors, church leaders, media producers, and VBS teachers.
 - c. Rev. Sergei Sosedkin and his team provided leadership seminars for Russian-speaking students and future church leaders, who are attending universities in Russia and Ukraine.

D. Mercy and justice on the global mission field

While the mission of BTGMI 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 BTGMI programs provide messages of hope for people who are living in incredibly difficult circumstances—questioning their beliefs in places where it could be dangerous to do so, living in physical poverty, or suffering from sickness. In these ways we also address issues of social justice through our various programs in several languages.

1. Our ministry partners in India practice a holistic approach, providing for physical as well as spiritual needs. The team ministers to women and

children in poverty, providing a health clinic, tutoring for children, and job skills training for women. This outreach meets the practical needs of our listening audience and community members.

2. Our Japanese ministry team launched its *Words of Hope* audio program for people who suffered devastating loss after the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Northern Japan in 2011. Although the ministry team no longer produces new episodes of this program, they began sharing the messages in parts of Japan affected by severe floods and landslides in recent years.
3. Our *Family Fire* staff (see section III, A, 4 of this report) produces materials for English speakers experiencing pain and brokenness in their lives.
4. With the goal of teaching and encouraging Christ-followers to live out their faith, ReFrame Media also produces the *Think Christian* online blog and the *Groundwork* audio program, which regularly offers discussions on issues related to biblical justice.

For example, in late 2019, when *Watchmen*, a popular television show based on a comic-book series, premiered, *Think Christian* posted an article that draws comparisons from the show's plot to the book of Jeremiah: "All of us—perhaps particularly those of us who identify as Christian activists—need to come to terms with our own past and find paths toward healing if we are to pursue justice in healthy ways. We must be like the one who cries out in Jeremiah 17:4, 'Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed.'"

E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

The core mission of BTGMI is gospel proclamation through a variety of media, sharing the gospel with people wherever they are in the world. BTGMI continually seeks out culturally relevant and effective ways to proclaim the gospel and call people into relationship with God.

1. We have increasingly moved to a model of partnership with local denominations and organizations in our international ministries. This provides a 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—reaching all the way to Angola, West Africa.
2. As our world transitions to using less paper, BTGMI 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 is also available offline.

III. Connecting with churches

A. *ReFrame Media*

BTGMI's English ministry, ReFrame Media, offers a family of programs to help people of all ages and stages of faith reframe their lives in the light of God's Word. Resources available to churches, families, and individuals include the following and can be found at ReFrameMedia.com:

1. The *Today* devotions, produced since 1950, are available in print, on the web at TodayDevotional.com by email subscription, Facebook posts, and digital apps. We print and distribute about 210,000 *Today* booklets six times each year and more than 211,000 people have signed up to access *Today* emails; in addition, about 75,000 people use the *Today* devotional app on their mobile devices.

Today is also received by more than 13,500 prisoners throughout North America. We receive numerous comments from inmates whose lives have been changed by God through *Today* devotional readings. Verna receives *Today* in prison and wrote recently, "I am born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. I am free on the inside even though I am incarcerated. Please pray for me and send this devotional guide to my sister."

2. *Kids Corner* is a children's program for 6- to 12-year-olds. This program has transitioned from a single audio program to a growing collection of online resources delivered across North America for children's spiritual growth. *Kids Corner* launched a new website in 2018, making all 20 seasons of its audio series more readily available and—using online episode guides—more interactive. *Kids Corner* launched new videos in 2019 along with a graphic novel that tells the story of the Bible with illustrations.
3. *Groundwork* is a 30-minute audio program and podcast that builds biblical foundations for life. *Groundwork* is produced in partnership with Words of Hope, a ministry of the Reformed Church in America. Pastors Scott Hoezee (Calvin Theological Seminary) and Dave Bast (Words of Hope) guide listeners in casual but thoughtful conversations about practical applications of God's Word in today's world. You can listen on the air or online at GroundworkOnline.com.
4. *Family Fire* is an online community (through Facebook and the website FamilyFire.com) that provides resources to strengthen families through articles, devotions, email and social media interaction, and live retreat events.
5. *Think Christian* is a collaborative online magazine in which authors consider how popular culture and its cultivators interact with God's story. Rooted in the Reformed tradition, *Think Christian* recognizes that all of culture falls within God's sovereignty, and that by his common grace believers and unbelievers alike are capable of creating beautiful things.
6. *Church Juice* helps churches be intentional about how to use the wide variety of media tools available to them in order to effectively communicate with their congregations and communities. Whether it is through marketing, social media, internal communications, website development, or other avenues, *Church Juice* can equip you to energize your church's communications.

Church Juice staff also organize virtual and in-person opportunities for church communicators to come together, learn from, and encourage one another. These in-person opportunities included a workshop at Inspire 2019 on "The Effective Church Website."

Visit ChurchJuice.com for all of *Church Juice's* free resources, including the following:

- Guides on how to use Facebook, Twitter, or other social media.
- Real-life examples and case studies from churches that have improved their communication strategies over the years.
- Free images that you can use on your church’s website or to inspire your own creativity.
- Links to the *Church Juice* podcast episodes for on-the-go discussions and guides on church communications.

If you have questions about how your church can improve its communications, start a conversation with *Church Juice* producer Bryan Haley. Email him anytime at bryan@churchjuice.com.

B. Other examples of BTGMI resourcing local churches over the past year

1. Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) has partnered with the CRC’s Korean Council since 2008 to publish the bilingual Korean-English version of *Today*.
2. ReFrame Media has produced 33 ebooks as downloadable pdfs. Several are also available in print for group discussion or personal growth. Topics from the newest resources include theology in the TV series *The Office*, bullying, *Our Only Comfort: a Devotional Series for Hard Times*, and *Facebook for Churches*.
3. BTGMI provides videos, bulletin inserts, and ministry update letters. See BackToGod.net/churches/resources for a list of church resources.

Back to God Ministries International
Kurt Selles, director

Resonate Global Mission

I. Introduction

Over 100 years ago, Johanna Veenstra took a leap of faith in becoming our denomination's first international missionary. Johanna's example continues to inspire and encourage us as we seek to answer God's call in our own lives. As your mission agency, Resonate Global Mission is committed to equipping the Christian Reformed Church to continue to follow God wherever he places us.

This year we celebrated the 100-year anniversary of Johanna's answering God's call by examining the priorities that marked her ministry, and these priorities are still important today:

- *Encouraging young leaders*—Johanna was an advocate for all Christians, especially the young, to consider what missional calling God has for them. She wrote to her supporters to remind them of the importance of mission. For her, young people preparing for mission-focused ministry are “unspeakably precious.”
- *Empowering women*—Johanna worked to raise up female leaders in ministry—not only the young women she recruited to Nigeria from her own church, but also in the villages and towns of Nigeria. She announced that the good news of Jesus was for the women as well as the men, which often surprised the people she met. She encouraged new Christian women to lead others to Christ!
- *Following God's call*—Living out her exhortations to others to follow God's leading, Johanna wrestled with his will through prayer, devotions, and listening carefully to the words of her pastors, teachers, and counselors. Reflection on God's leading, she wrote, “is a most valuable part of a missionary's preparation for service.”

Synod has given Resonate the mandate to “give leadership to the denomination in its task of bringing the gospel holistically to the people of North America and the world and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church.”

Our denomination has a long history of working to bring the gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)—work we have done imperfectly, but with a desire to be faithful to the Great Commission. We are seeking a future with this vision inspired by the past.

Like Johanna, we can be confident that God has a role for us to play in his mission. Wherever the members and churches of our denomination may be, Resonate is ready to walk alongside. Resonate wants to equip and support our churches for whatever work God has called them to—whether into the known or the unknown.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Of the five ministry priorities, Resonate's main focus is global mission. We are charged with providing leadership to the CRC in its work of proclaiming the gospel, and we are pleased to report a more refined focus on action and outcomes.

This past year, Resonate completed a two-year review of the vision, mission, and strategy that launched this mission agency. Looking back at the past two years as Resonate Global Mission, we see God leading and forming this new agency. Looking forward, we seek to follow the Holy Spirit into the future.

We are confident in embracing and implementing the vision that brought Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions together as Resonate in 2017. Now, after two years of working together, we have a better sense of how God is calling Resonate to equip the Christian Reformed Church for mission.

Resonate Global Mission will continue to pursue three overarching outcomes: missional leadership, mission-shaped congregations, and holistic mission networks. In addition, we are learning to measure this work by the actions that clarify Resonate's role, and director Zachary King will report on these developments at Synod 2021.

A. Mission-shaped congregations

God calls everyone to join him on mission. We want to see an increasing number of diverse, locally rooted, and globally connected congregations and ministries bearing faithful witness to Christ's reign and actively making disciples who live in the way of Jesus.

Together with you, Resonate is continuing to build God's church by walking alongside our congregations. Your support for Resonate means more churches that live out the gospel and become shaped by God's mission. A mission-shaped church not only proclaims but also lives out the life-transforming power of the gospel so that all people know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our work to help congregations become mission-shaped is as follows:

1. Church planting—Starting new churches is a vital part of Resonate's ministry. New churches are the most effective tool we have to reach new groups of people. Resonate is investing in recruiting, training, coaching, encouragement, and resources for new churches.
2. Strengthening churches—Our local congregations are one of the richest resources for mission. Resonate helps established churches to discover and unleash God's plan for their time and place. Resonate is investing in strengthening churches for mission both locally and globally.
3. Discipleship—The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of Christians worldwide, calling them into a deeper life of faith. Resonate is investing in discipling and training Christians who are discovering God's plan for their lives.
4. Evangelism—The work of church planters and missionaries has grown the global church in amazing ways, but more than 1.5 billion people still have not heard the gospel! Resonate is investing in training people to witness and proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ.

Example and Story: "Maybe You Are the Answer"

"The Indo-Pak community is scattered in southern California," said Eric Sarwar, pastor of Artesia City Church, a church plant supported in part by Resonate Global Mission.

As a result, many believers don't have the opportunity to worship God in ways that express their heart—and people seeking faith don't have the opportunity to hear the Word of God in a language that speaks to their heart.

With Sarwar's leadership, Artesia City Church is changing that.

Born and raised in Pakistan, Sarwar realized there were no Indian-Pakistani churches in the CRC when he enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Dr. John Witvliet, his mentor and professor, said: "Maybe you are the answer." Sarwar felt a strong sense of calling to plant a church.

After graduating, he moved to southern California. During a time of searching out first- and second-generation Indian-Pakistani newcomers scattered throughout the area, Sarwar learned of a congregation that had been started in another denomination but was languishing because it needed a pastor. Sarwar was called by Bethany CRC in Bellflower, California, to pastor that congregation, Artesia City Church, and he was ordained in the CRCNA in December 2016. With Sarwar's leadership and support from Resonate, Artesia City Church is becoming a strong and vibrant congregation.

The church plant seeks not only to provide a welcoming space for believers but also to invite people who don't know Christ into the community.

We thank God for working through Resonate church plants and ministry leaders like Sarwar to provide spaces where all people can worship in their heart languages! "I see it is God's hand and direction that led me to connect with the CRCNA," said Sarwar.

Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/eric.

B. Missional leaders

Missional leaders cast vision, set direction, and equip people to follow where the Holy Spirit is leading them. We want to see an increasing number of diverse leaders equipped to participate in God's mission of saving the lost and renewing all things.

Resonate joins with the leaders God is calling from among our congregations to send the good news of Jesus Christ out like an expanding, amplifying sound. As each leader invites others to join who, in turn, invite still others, our church can bring fresh energy to mission work—together.

1. **Campus Ministry**—Resonate engages universities and colleges in ministry on more than 35 campuses across North America. Resonate is investing in training and supporting campus ministers to be a faithful presence on campuses and to help students discover God's will for their lives.
2. **Leadership development**—We are all missionaries, and our mission field is all around us! Resonate is investing in identifying and equipping individual leaders and teachers worldwide through initiatives like seminary education and training leaders to work alongside others in their communities—whether in North America or overseas.
3. **Global mission education**—Our staff walks alongside congregations to encourage them in fulfilling God's mission. Resonate is investing in training mission committees, forging partnerships, and working with young adults whom God is calling to mission work.

Example and Story: "I Want to Make This Christian Walk My Own"

Albina grew up in an Orthodox Christian home. Two or three times a year, she and her family would go to church in their small Ukrainian town.

"It was mostly a religious or cultural thing rather than a relationship with the living God," said Albina.

But when she started studying at Resonate Global Mission partner LCC International University in Lithuania, God showed her that faith wasn't only about going to church. God showed Albina that she could have a relationship with him.

Albina became immersed in a new lifestyle at LCC, where Resonate missionaries work alongside other faculty and staff to support and encourage an environment where students can grow in relationship with God. Students, faculty, and staff gather regularly for chapel, Bible study, and times of worship, and Albina decided to join them.

She also became friends with some girls who went to church every week. One week, she went to church with them and sensed the Holy Spirit's presence in a way she never had before.

"I understood that I had to make a decision," said Albina. "I said . . . 'Let's do it for real. I want to make this Christian walk my own, and I want to live it out, whatever the cost.'"

Albina said that she's learning more every day about what it means to commit her life to Christ.

Praise God for bringing Albina into a deeper relationship with him through the LCC community that you support through Resonate! Please pray for students like Albina, who are owning their faith and growing as leaders in God's mission.

Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/albina.

C. Holistic mission networks

As more people join God on mission, we want to see an increasing number of diverse and inclusive local networks that unite God's people to work for spiritual and social transformation of their communities.

By working with others in ministry, Resonate seeks to start a movement that reverberates across North America. Joining God's mission is hard work, and no one church or organization can do it alone. Resonate's work connecting churches in holistic mission networks is as follows:

1. Coaching leaders of holistic mission networks to help local churches come together and accomplish more than they could alone.
2. Sending holistic mission network developers and community chaplains in partnership with local congregations.
3. Developing new experiments and methods of mission work so that networks around the globe can learn from one another.
4. Connecting pastors, church planters, and ministry leaders who need support with those who have vital resources to offer, like experience, coaching, and encouragement.

Example and Story: Uniting for Gospel Transformation

Churches in Rockwood, Oregon, would rarely interact, let alone work together. It's a familiar problem—one that Resonate helps churches address

with support from people like you, because we can do more ministry together than we can alone.

Four years ago, a group of people from the neighboring churches in Rockwood came together with a vision to unite their congregations in order to better serve the local community. They started with a worship service: Rockwood United Worship (RUW).

Today, Pastor Pete Armstrong, a local mission leader for Resonate, helps lead RUW and encourage the participating churches to see it as more than just a worship service. RUW exists to inspire action! When churches come together, the networks they form help to drive the work of God's mission.

"In a place like Rockwood . . . we need to be linking arms with other bodies of believers to serve the city," said Armstrong. This ministry has been able to grow by linking arms not only with their neighbors but also with Resonate.

The first RUW hosted eight churches—and this year, there were nearly twenty. "It really encouraged me to get outside of myself . . ." said Tyler, a member at Parklane CRC who is part of RUW, ". . . and build relationships for the sake of the gospel of Christ to be glorified in Rockwood."

Resonate wants to see more people living in relationship with Christ—and more communities transformed by the gospel. Individual and community transformation can take a long time, but RUW is uniting churches and believers with a vision for God's mission. That's the power of working together!

"Pray for the churches in the Rockwood area, that we would live the life of Jesus," asks Tyler. "I know that if we do that and stay true to that, our communities will change."

Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/rockwood.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)*

Resonate exists to be an extension of the local church—a partner in the work of God's mission. We accomplish this through two primary ways: first, by organizing a staff distributed by region, and, second, by mobilizing the people in our congregations and equipping them for service.

Our relationship with churches is vital, and we have adopted the postures of prayer, listening, serving, learning, peacemaking, and care and accountability.

A. Regional mission teams

With six regions in North America and eight internationally, Resonate's regional mission teams are made up of missionaries, pastors, and others doing embedded ministry within several regions. Resonate's regional structure exists to serve the church by offering these ministry leaders with their skills and expertise. These teams are not only spreading the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ but also multiplying ministry by cultivating new mission leaders and partnerships. A list of the regions and their leaders follows:

Eastern Canada: Beth Fellingner

Western Canada: Rich Braaksma

Eastern U.S.: Marco Avila

Great Lakes: Amy Schenkel

Central U.S.: Peter Kelder

Western U.S.: Ben Katt
Central America: Steve Holtrop
East and Central Asia: Paul Yu
Eastern and Southern Africa: Mike Ribbens
Europe: Steve Van Zanen
Mexico and the Caribbean: Luis Pellecer
Middle East: Name withheld
South and Southeast Asia: Joyce Suh
West Africa: Sosthene Maletoungou

Example and Story: God's Call to the Small Towns

After years working as an ironworker, carpenter, and dairy farmer, Resonate local mission leader David Katsma heard God's call to rural ministry. He and his family planted MarshView Ministries CRC in Horicon, Wisconsin, in 1998, and now, as he continues to serve there as lead pastor, he helps small-town churches discover God's plan for them.

"We're in it for the long haul," said David, who sensed from the beginning that having a long-term pastor would be the best fit for a small-town church.

Churches that serve country communities and farming towns are an important part of God's work through Resonate, and Resonate is looking for new ways to strengthen them. Leaders like David know that church planting and church ministry look a little different out in the country.

"There is such a need for a strong presence in the community that's not just doing church but really wants to transform lives," said David. "There's a large field to work in, but sometimes we don't see that—we see rural communities as being 'churched' already."

David's blue-collar background serves him well in his work as a pastor and a local mission leader to rural communities. He is able to relate to people and make better connections, and sometimes unique opportunities are presented that combine both types of work.

An important area of common ground for David and his community is a strong work ethic. He recognizes the importance of putting in time and effort to lead his church and to equip other churches for ministry.

"I've always said that dairy farming isn't just a job; it's a lifestyle," said David. "The same is true for ministry."

For more information, see resonateglobalmission.org/central-usa.

B. Mobilizing congregations

At Resonate we believe that the best way to spread the gospel is through the work of a healthy church. That's why we aim to help each congregation in the Christian Reformed Church discover God's plan for their neighborhood and join in. Resonate works with congregations in several key areas:

1. Engaging younger generations

Resonate provides volunteer opportunities to work alongside Christian leaders around the world. Young members of the CRC can explore their calling through these opportunities and grow in their relationship with Christ. Short-term volunteer opportunities provide discipleship for young adults that includes mentorship as well as local and international service experiences.

2. Cohort

Resonate provides college-age participants with a yearlong experience in which they are immersed as a cohort in a new culture to serve with local mission organizations. These participants live out their faith by worshipping with the international church, learning from community leaders, and loving God and their neighbors. Cohort opportunities are expanding, with sites planned in Central America, the Middle East, and Detroit, Michigan.

3. Preparing missionaries and volunteers for service

Hundreds of Christian Reformed members serve as missionaries and volunteers with Resonate, and our orientation team is there to make sure they are prepared and connected to their sending and supporting churches. Resonate staff prepare missionaries and volunteers in spiritual care, conflict management, relationship development, support-raising, diversity and antiracism, communication, and other topics important in cross-cultural living.

4. Missions advocates

Missions advocates serve as church-appointed volunteers who fuel interest for the church in international missions and act as a link between the congregation and the ways they are engaging in God's mission in the world.

5. Church renewal for mission

Resonate staff and coaches work with Christian Reformed congregations through initiatives like Go Local and Churches Learning Change, which cultivate change and renewal for mission. Through these initiatives we seek to help churches discover God's plan for their congregation and local community.

6. Church communication and engagements

Resonate shares how God is working through emails, mailings, and online postings that our staff share with classis committees and present at classis meetings. Staff members also preach at churches and present at events.

Example and Story: Building God's Kingdom

This past spring, Ken Herfst and students from Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, walked the narrow streets of a slum on the outskirts of the main dump in Guatemala City, the capital of Guatemala.

Herfst and his students were on a mission trip with Resonate Global Mission—but they didn't build any houses, paint any church buildings, or facilitate any trainings or programs. "Those projects have their place," said Herfst, "but our purpose was to listen, observe, and reflect together."

They asked themselves: What does it look like to join God in mission and build his kingdom?

Students were invited into communities, homes, and churches. They visited a slum, joined a family for a traditional meal, and crowded into a church office to hear stories of Guatemala's history. In every conversation, students were encouraged to think about ministry not just in terms of talking about the gospel but also in practicing what Jesus did and said.

It helped grow the way I think about mission,” said Adrian Faber, a student who participated in the vision trip. “Going on the trip to Guatemala opened my eyes to how mission work is rooted. . . . It’s about working with people, knowing people. . . .”

Faber graduated from Redeemer this past year and is returning to Central America as part of Resonate’s Cohort—a year-long mission experience designed specifically for young adults to explore their calling while gaining experience working with local mission organizations at the grassroots level.

These trips may just be a few days long, but they help to equip students to live out the gospel for the rest of their lives.

Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/redeemer.

Resonate Global Mission
Zachary King, director

Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue

I. Introduction

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), operating as the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, is a justice and reconciliation ministry of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada. The Centre for Public Dialogue works to encourage active Christian citizenship, studies critical issues facing Canadian society from a Reformed perspective, and interacts with policy makers and shapers in a constructive manner. Our focus issues are currently refugee rights and resettlement, Indigenous justice and reconciliation, and climate justice. We also strive to be nimble and responsive on critical issues that come up—for example, providing resources to churches during the 2019 election.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

We seek to work with local churches in an effort to live into the call to seek God's justice and peace in every area of life. We do this in the following ways:

1. Providing liturgical and devotional resources connected to Indigenous justice, refugee rights, and climate care via our website and social media. We support binational efforts like the CRCNA's Day of Justice (August) and provide devotional and action resources for justice for Indigenous children in connection with our Lenten challenge and offering Sunday. This year more than one hundred churches across Canada marked our offering Sunday (Justice and Hope Sunday in March).
2. Gathering local church members to tell stories and think together about Christ's call to justice through our *Do Justice* blog (dojustice.crcna.org). Through our *Do Justice* columnists' initiative, CRC and RCA writers from across North America have regularly shared the ways in which they are wrestling with the call to do justice in their own local contexts. Thirteen regular columnists (including six people of color) focus on specific issues from poverty to climate change to Reformed theological reflections to refugee sponsorship. We also regularly run series to dig deeper into specific issues. Series topics this year have included religious persecution, climate change, immigration, power, and abortion.
3. Working closely with the Canadian Ministries justice mobilizer, Cindy Stover, to develop and animate learning opportunities on justice and reconciliation. This currently includes a collaboration with Resonate Global Mission, Faith Formation Ministries, Diaconal Ministries Canada, World Renew, and the Canada justice and reconciliation team to animate communities of learning and to practice on justice and reconciliation among congregational leaders.
4. The intensifying political and cultural turbulence of our day (related to populism, the digitization and consumerization of political decision-

making, and digitally driven cultural individualism) requires a faithful liturgical (public good/service) and prophetic salt-and-light response. For this reason, and inspired in part by synodical deliberations, CCG engages in regular discernment and dialogue on biblical and theological principles for public discipleship. For example, we facilitated a workshop at Inspire 2019 titled “Hopeful Citizenship in a Time of Division” and provided related blog materials.

B. Mercy and justice

We assist local churches in loving mercy and doing justice as follows:

1. Communicating with government through direct interaction with policy makers and shapers from our office in Ottawa and through mobilizing Christian citizens to interact with their elected representatives. We continue to work closely with partners to help local churches respond to urgent issues of justice and reconciliation. These partnerships include World Renew, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Canadian Council of Churches, KAIROS, and Citizens for Public Justice. This year we encouraged and supported church members throughout the election season to be active citizens. Our series of questions for candidates reached over 5,700 people. We continue to work with the Climate Witness Project to encourage local responsibility and citizen advocacy for climate justice.
2. Responding to requests for information from churches and members on current issues of concern.
3. Working with CRCNA partners to bring justice-themed workshops to churches. We have worked with World Renew and refugee service providers to refresh *Journey with Me*—a tool that invites churches to hear and respond to the stories of refugees. *Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy* is a practical citizen-action and reflection tool that we have launched with the Canadian Ministries justice mobilizer. Further, we conducted several pilots of *Demystifying Justice*, a workshop about the biblical principles of justice.
4. We continue to connect with churches through our Education Together campaign. Building on churches’ understanding of the importance of community involvement in education, we advocate with them to support this essential right for Indigenous youth.

C. Gospel proclamation and worship

Doing justice and reconciliation is gospel proclamation—we know and celebrate that Christ is renewing all things and that he calls us to be collaborators in this task. When the church does justice, our witness is stronger and has more integrity. As such, the work and partnerships mentioned above are an element of gospel proclamation and are motivated by a conviction that justice and worship are integrated.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

A. Engaging younger members

Young people make up the largest portion of our *Do Justice* blog audience: just under one-third of our readers are under age 34, and more than 50 percent are under age 44. In addition, a quarter of our social media followers

are under age 44. We continue to seek new ways of connecting with younger members, including the development of a YouTube channel.

B. Assisting churches within their local contexts

We regularly connect with churches across the country to help them seek justice. This year we facilitated the *Faith in Action* workshop six times across the country to help churches advocate for their local issues. We supported other regional events such as the creation care lecture series “Understanding Our Climate Crisis” to promote advocacy as an important avenue for caring for creation. Justice Mobilizer Cindy Stover supported additional events for local churches such as “Spark!” held in Truro, Nova Scotia.

Committee for Contact with the Government /
Centre for Public Dialogue

Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager

Disability Concerns

I. Introduction

A. *Mandate*

The Office of Disability Concerns (DC) strives to promote and foster relationships, communities, and societies where everybody belongs and everybody serves by assisting churches, agencies, institutions, and leadership within the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America to

- think and act in keeping with the biblical call regarding people with disabilities.
- break barriers of communication, architecture, and attitude.
- establish ministries with, for, and by people with disabilities and their families.

B. *Vision*

Since 2009, CRC DC has been working in close cooperation with the Disability Concerns office of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Our vision together can be summarized briefly: “In healthy churches, ministries, and communities, everybody belongs, and everybody serves.”

C. *Mission*

DC’s mission is to bring about the full participation of all people with disabilities in the life of the church, and the full participation of the church in the lives of people with disabilities. We have four areas of focus:

1. Network – Strengthen the network of disability advocates both in quantity and quality.
2. Awareness/ education – Help churches prioritize the full inclusion of people living with disabilities.
3. Resource/ consultation – Provide churches with the tools they need to engage in ministry with people who have disabilities in congregation and community.
4. Ministry promotion – Enhance and promote the future growth and development of Disability Concerns for the purpose of serving communities and societies more effectively.

As of January 2020, DC has two employees totaling 1.5 FTE: a full-time director, Mark Stephenson, who works from the CRC’s Grand Rapids office, and a volunteer and communications specialist, Becky Jones, who shares her time with Disability Concerns and Safe Church Ministries (20 hours/10 hours) and works from the CRC’s Burlington (Ont.) office.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Although our work is reflected in all five of the CRC’s areas of calling, we give primary focus to the Mercy and Justice area.

A. Faith formation

We work on the faith formation of God's people primarily in partnership with two other ministries: Friendship Ministries, which focuses especially on faith formation with persons who have intellectual disabilities, and Faith Formation Ministries. Though Friendship is a separate ministry from the CRC, DC's director, Mark Stephenson, serves on the Friendship Ministries board and executive committee, and he assists Friendship in the development of their inclusive small group curriculum *Together* (together-small-groups.org). DC also promotes the sales of Friendship Ministries materials and encourages the formation of Friendship groups. In 2018, Disability Concerns began working closely with Faith Formation Ministries in assisting churches in their ministry with adults in the "third third" of life (age 55 and over). This work has included two conferences, the production of two Ten Ways tools, and the *Third Third of Life Toolkit* (see crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits). We pray that this work will equip churches to grow as communities among whom *all belong and all serve*, no matter people's ages or abilities.

B. Servant leadership

CRC and RCA DC ministries work in a variety of ways to develop people's leadership skills. Identifying and equipping disability advocates is the primary way that we go about our work. We help recruit and equip hundreds of volunteers across both denominations to serve churches and classes to accomplish the mandate, mission, and vision of Disability Concerns. As of January 2020, 425 church disability advocates and 34 regional disability advocates are serving Christian Reformed churches and classes.

All disability advocates and many churches have received our *Inclusion Handbook: Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves*, which helps church leaders and members welcome and engage people with disabilities in the life of the church. In 2019 over 2,000 church and regional advocates as well as many others from across North America received training from DC at connection and training events that took place in Arizona, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Virginia, Alberta, and Ontario. To network and encourage the volunteer advocates, DC staff meet quarterly (virtually or in person) with six regional groups of disability advocates across North America for networking and encouragement.

DC volunteers and staff help to equip church leaders by speaking at churches, classis meetings, conferences, webinars, and seminary classes, and by consulting with church leaders about engaging people with disabilities in church life. The CRC DC Advisory Committee and the RCA DC Guiding Coalition serve as one team that advises both ministries through meetings several times per year. DC staff provide advice and assistance to other CRC staff on issues related to disability and ministry.

The DC web and Network pages continue to attract additional users, with more than a 10-percent increase in pageviews in 2019 as compared to 2018. The Associated Church Press honored the Disability Concerns newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, with a first-place award in the newsletters category, and the DC Network blog received a second-place award.

C. Global mission

In addition to the worldwide outreach made possible by our web and Network pages, DC staff regularly consult with other ministries. Agency

disability advocates, who are CRC agency and educational institution staff, meet several times per year to discuss ways in which all CRC ministries worldwide can engage with people who have disabilities.

D. Mercy and justice

The mercy and justice aspect of our denomination's calling animates and drives the day-to-day work of Disability Concerns. A person with a disability lives not only with an impairment but also with the discrimination that favors able-bodied people (ableism) and marginalizes and stigmatizes anyone living with an impairment. Therefore, DC strives to promote and foster relationships, communities, and societies where *everybody belongs and everybody serves*.

As one way to measure progress in this work, we look at numbers in the accessibility section of the annual *Yearbook* survey. For example, 302 CRC congregations (29%) worship in barrier-free facilities, and another 643 have partially accessible facilities; so a total of 91 percent of CRC church buildings are fully or partially accessible. In addition, 567 churches (55%) have barrier-free sound, and 454 (44%) have barrier-free books/materials in print. Further, 562 churches (54%) offer transportation for people who cannot drive themselves, and 37 percent of congregations have adopted a church policy on disability. As well, in *Breaking Barriers*, on our Network pages, and in CRC Communications and *Banner* articles, DC tells stories of people in CRC and RCA churches who are engaging in disability advocacy and embracing positive change.

Of the four offices identified in the CRC Church Order, our work aligns most closely with that of deacons, who are called to "be compassionate to those in need and treat them with dignity and respect" and to "be prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society" (Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, 2016). Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) and CRC DC recently reviewed and updated their Memorandum of Understanding. The two ministries work together so that communities and churches in Canada will be enriched and strengthened by engaging with people who have disabilities and so that churches will work to provide for the spiritual, social, emotional, and physical well-being of persons and families with disabilities.

This past year, our director was elected president of the board of Pathways to Promise, a parachurch organization founded in 1988 by CRC Disability Concerns and other ministries to help churches minister with people and families with mental illnesses.

RCA and CRC Disability Concerns ministries are members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition, which works on public policy priorities in Washington, D.C.

With the RCA coordinator for DC, Terry DeYoung, our director wrote a journal article on the shared work of CRC and RCA DC ministries over the past ten years and presented this article at a symposium for scholars and practitioners of Disability and Ministry at Wheaton College, at a Calvin Theological Seminary town hall, and at a workshop at the Inspire conference in August 2019.

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

Many RCA and CRC regional advocates, church advocates, and members of the CRC/RCA DC Advisory Team wrote brief devotions for a Lenten

series that the RCA organizes each year. These devotions give visibility to RCA/CRC advocates and to the work of DC.

Synod has asked CRC congregations to celebrate Disability Week each year to raise awareness about the gifts and needs of congregational and community members who have disabilities. This year Disability Week will be celebrated October 12-18, 2020. DC provides worship leaders with a variety of online resources, including litanies, prayers, and sermons. In appropriate settings, we have been promoting the large-print edition of the hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts*. DC consults with worship leaders on the best ways to include people who have disabilities in the church's life, including worship life.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

A. Desired Future 1—Ministry in Communities

DC places the highest priority on a network of church and regional disability advocates, connecting our work directly to churches and classes by identifying and equipping local people to minister within their local context. These ministry leaders help churches and classes better reflect the body of Christ, especially as described in Luke 14:15-24 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Congregations that do this well are strongly equipped to connect with members of their community, 15 to 20 percent of whom live with disabilities.

B. Desired Futures 2 and 3—Faith Formation and Leadership

See sections II, A and II, B above. In addition, DC provides a variety of resources for congregations to engage children and young people with disabilities in all of congregational life. The Mental Health Task Force is also working on resourcing congregations for ministry with youth who have mental health challenges.

C. Desired Future 4—Identity

In the Reformed understanding of vocation, God calls all of his people to serve in his kingdom as God has gifted them. For this reason, we cast the vision of *everybody, including people with disabilities, belonging to and serving God in church and community*.

D. Desired Future 5—Collaboration

Through our work with RCA Disability Concerns and other ministries, through the Network, through regular gatherings of disability advocates, and through direct connections with churches, Disability Concerns seeks to foster collaboration that will enhance the ministries of congregations and advance the work of God's kingdom.

Disability Concerns
Mark Stephenson, director

Indigenous Ministries (Canada)

In the past few years, our Indigenous ministry entities in Canada have been walking an increasingly intentional journey of reconciliation in their work due to a sharpening focus across the country in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, completed in 2015 (see nctr.ca). Through ministries of compassionate community, awareness raising, and advocacy, ministry with Indigenous persons in Canada and the connection to local churches continues to grow faithful and stronger. This they have done in concert with both the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee (CIMC). Key to this movement and maturation among all of our Indigenous ministry efforts have been their thoughtful review and evaluation throughout 2018-2019. CIMC now has an annual plan that is affirmed through the CRCNA Canada Corporation as a way of validating their work and its integration with partnerships at the local church level and beyond. As well, the three Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres have received their updated five-year evaluations. These have also been passed through the governing board of the CRCNA Canada Corporation.

The Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Edmonton, Alberta—all funded by the Christian Reformed Church—help to meet the spiritual and social needs of Indigenous Canadians to help them live dignified and harmonious lives. These ministry centres are highly regarded by the communities they serve. In fact, the United Church of Canada used the Winnipeg Centre as a chief example of positive ministry within which they also participate in ecumenical partnership. Ministry participants value the dignity and respect they experience as they attend and participate in the programs and community activities.

The ministry of **Indigenous Christian Fellowship** (ICF) continues to flourish in Regina, Saskatchewan, the city in Canada with the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples. As a province, Saskatchewan also has the highest number of Canadian Indian Residential School survivors. Regina is home as well to the First Nations University of Canada and the home base (Little Black Bear First Nation) of Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada. Within this context the ministry persists in presenting the gospel of Christ using the gifts of Indigenous peoples.

In April 2019, Indigenous students of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies confirmed ICF's connection to the Indigenous community by raising more than \$2,000 for ICF in an initiative they named "Indigenous Empowerment Project." Their leader in the effort, Sylvia Worm, noted ICF's support for grieving families through its hosting of wakes and funerals for the local Indigenous community. (Over the years, more than 200 wakes and funerals have been held at ICF.)

In October, ICF held its first fund-raising gala. More than 250 people attended, and many were introduced to the work of the ministry for the first time. Stories from speakers highlighted the work of ICF through the theme of "Hurt, Healing, and Hope." A short film by Don List of Birdsong Communications underscored the event's theme. This video and others produced in 2019 are available on the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee website (crcna.org/indigenous/canadian).

The past year has seen an increasing amount of violence in the ministry's neighborhood. Three recent deaths in Regina occurred within a city block of ICF's front doors. ICF seems like an oasis of peace and sanctuary within what too often can feel like a valley of the shadow of death. The prayers and support of the CRCNA help to remind the ICF council, staff, and volunteers to count on the presence of Christ's Spirit in their ongoing pilgrimage of hope.

The **Edmonton Native Healing Centre** community is a place for people of all cultures, faiths, and financial straits to meet and grow together. We build common ground among people. Further, most of our community and all of our staff are Indigenous, and we strive to speak truth and live out the principles of reconciliation. The following is a brief story of how our ministry tries to build a vibrant community.

Christy came through our doors about ten years ago, while she worked with mentally and physically challenged community members. She transitioned out of that job to become an Edmonton transit bus driver, and then she became ill and became a close family member to our ministry. Christy passed away suddenly on December 12, 2019, and our family table has an empty place, which we continue to grieve. The joy of our ministry journey includes working with people not only during the good times but also in the darkest moments of our earthly journeys. Edmonton Native Healing Centre became Christy's family because she had only one brother, who lived in Texas, with whom she spoke only once or twice a year. Christy participated in our collective kitchen program and brought her sense of humor to lighten the workload. She would whine and complain to staff because she was among family and felt safe to do so. Christy would volunteer to open up the ministry center in the mornings, help clean up after soup and bannock on Wednesdays, and more; she just wanted to feel like she was part of a family.

This brief story demonstrates how we seek to create moments of sitting at the well with Jesus and to let the Holy Spirit lead us into right relationships with our friends and family.

Winnipeg's **Indigenous Family Centre** again had a very difficult year because of the crystal-meth crisis the city is experiencing. We have adapted in this way by providing a Christ-centered location to do a sweat.

This new year has brought a renewed focus on healing ministries—one-on-one counseling, sharing circles, and times of healing prayer, as well as activities that promote healing in body, soul, mind, and spirit. Intergenerational trauma has been a cause of many ills within our community, but we believe that intergenerational love is stronger. As we are led by God's love and Spirit, we are experiencing renewed hope, healing, and restoration.

The Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee consists of key volunteers, the Urban Indigenous Ministry directors, and other ecumenical partners (Reformed Church in America and Presbyterian Church Canada) who continue to urge churches to grow in structuring their ministry toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

CIMC works on educating churches about colonialism and its negative influences on Indigenous peoples and how the church and Indigenous peoples need reconciliation with one another. Educational resources, studies, and

other tools are increasingly available. A highlight this year included the pilot of a Truth and Reconciliation book club facilitated by justice and reconciliation mobilizer Shannon Perez.

CIMC's key hope is for all churches to access the many tools and resources available as reconciliation becomes a stronger theme in our churches—not only reconciliation with God through Christ but also reconciliation within in our nation. Given the history of the church in Canada, the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is an important way in which the Canadian CRC can work toward shalom.

Together with the Centre for Public Dialogue and KAIROS, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise is a workshop being shared throughout Canada. It has provided many with an opportunity to understand the injustices faced by First Nations people in the history of Canada, especially with regard to land claims. Advocacy for aboriginal rights is another important component of Indigenous ministry in Canada. The work on Indigenous education reform carried out by the Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue (crcna.org/publicdialogue) involves working with a broad coalition of churches and Indigenous organizations to encourage public awareness and action in Indigenous education. (See also the report by the Committee for Contact with the Government.)

Race Relations

I. Introduction

The Office of Race Relations continues to meet the challenges of assisting the congregations, classes, agencies, congregational ministries, and institutions of the CRCNA in embracing and living out our identity as God's diverse and unified family through continued and growing partnerships and collaborations. Race Relations is privileged to continue its responsibilities in (1) antiracism and racial reconciliation initiatives that provide education, training, and resources; (2) Inspire regional gatherings; (3) All Nations Heritage celebrations; and (4) a scholarship program that provides not only financial assistance but also training in antiracism and cultural awareness for students attending our institutions of higher education.

II. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

Within our mandate for antiracism and racial reconciliation, we are called to provide education and resources to equip our denomination not only to eliminate the effects of the sin of racism but also to facilitate reconciliation through workshops, materials, and coaching. We provide several workshops: Looking Back, Moving Forward (U.S.), The Act of Re-membering (Canada), and Churches between Borders. In partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice we have also collaborated in conducting the Blanket Exercise throughout the year. First developed in Canada and later contextualized for use in the United States, the Blanket Exercise provides an interactive telling of the shared history of Indigenous peoples in North America. This is a history from a perspective not often heard, and it speaks to the profound urgency of reconciliation.

III. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. *Servant leadership*

In the past year we helped to support servant leadership in the following ways:

- consulting with Classes California South, Arizona, Greater Los Angeles, Columbia, and Red Mesa on leadership development, minority candidate assessments, and strategic planning
- coaching Consejo Latino in Phoenix, Arizona, on multiethnic leadership development
- coaching and consulting the Canadian Ministries Team in the Burlington (Ont.) offices as well as Classis Hamilton in Canada
- coaching on conflict resolution in Classis California South
- sponsoring four students who attend CRC-endorsed institutions through the Race Relations Scholarship Program. More information is available, including the application forms, on our website at crcna.org/race/scholarships.

B. *Mercy and justice*

We promote mercy and justice efforts in many ways. In 2019 we accomplished the following:

- led racial reconciliation workshops and trainings with Grant (Mich.) CRC; Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Coit Community CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Fellowship CRC, Traverse City, Michigan; the All Ontario Youth Conference; Inspire 2019; and the Glocal Conference
- made presentations to Classis Chicago South; City Kidz in Hamilton, Ontario; Grand Valley State University (Mich.); Inspire 2019 (Black History tour); and the CRCNA offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- led healing circles at Tapestry Church, Oakland, California
- assisted Classes Hackensack and California South in creating overtures to Synod 2019 that led to declaring kinism a heresy
- wrote an apologetic tool to refute the sin of kinism for use in churches
- sponsored the first Sankofa trip in October with Congregations Organized for Racial Reconciliation and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
- held conversations with the Reformed Church in America’s race relations team to work on future projects
- assisted Back to God Ministries International in recording Bible stories for a children’s ministries website
- submitted columns for *The Banner* and the *Do Justice* blog
- maintained an active social media presence online with articles and other educational materials

C. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

In the past year we supported gospel proclamation and worship in the following ways:

- cosponsoring a Stand against Racism service in April with the Office of Social Justice at Woodlawn CRC ministry center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with over a hundred people in attendance
- preaching at and connecting with twenty-one churches
- coleading the Grand Rapids (Mich.) CRC staff Christmas Chapel with the Office of Social Justice in December
- providing bulletins and bulletin covers for All Nations Heritage celebrations scheduled for the first Sunday in October. The 2020 All Nations Heritage Week runs September 27 through October 4. Many of our materials are translated into several languages.

IV. Conclusion

The racial climate has become toxic, and the power and witness of the gospel are increasingly vital today. The denomination continues to face the challenge of placing a high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in life together as a church, as well as on the integrity of that identity. We are grateful that synod took strong action in declaring kinism a sin and noting, “The Bible makes clear that God’s ideal is a family of every tribe and nation being considered equal in every way. Kinist principles and praxis distort this truth” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818).

The ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. Race Relations is committed to its statement of vision

and its mandate to make the CRCNA a truly diverse and unified family of God. We continue to attribute all the progress and success in this ministry only to the grace and goodness of God. To this end, we covet your prayers. For more information on Race Relations matters, please visit our website at crcna.org/race and our Facebook page at facebook.com/crcracrelations.

Office of Race Relations
Reginald Smith, director

Safe Church Ministry

I. Introduction

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness prevention and response, to help build communities where the value of each person is respected and protected, where people are free to worship and grow free from abuse, and where the response to abuse is compassion and justice, which foster healing.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. *Mercy and justice*

Safe Church Ministry reflects the calling of the CRCNA in its focus on God's mercy and justice as a core part of our identity. Our congregations are filled with people who have experienced the dehumanizing and devastating effects of abuse. We must do our part to prevent future harm and to respond appropriately. Safe Church offers resources and support to people who want to join our Lord in the work of healing and preventing harm.

B. *Leadership development*

The sustainable strategy for Safe Church is to invest in volunteer and paid leaders at all levels of ministry across the United States and Canada. Therefore we align our ministry with the stated goal of servant leadership, knowing that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish. The role of a Safe Church coordinator in each classis is a key to overall ministry effectiveness. We are working with our coordinators to build networks of support and encouragement, as we also offer resources for the work.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)*

Effective safe church ministry involves all of us working together. Our goal is to see active safe church teams in every classis and in every congregation. Recommendations adopted by Synod 2018 require us to keep track and report on the following information. The data below are based on the responses of 859 churches to the annual *Yearbook* survey in 2019 (an increase from 760 respondents in 2018).

- 720 churches, or about 84 percent, have a written safe church or abuse prevention policy (down from 86 percent last year).
- 203 churches, or about 24 percent, require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position (up from 16 percent).
- 107 churches, or about 12 percent, use a prevention program with children and youth (up from 7 percent).
- 401 churches, or about 47 percent, have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct (up from 36 percent).
- 35 percent of churches have a safe church team or committee (up from 28 percent).

Synod 2018 also requested annual reporting on the number of classes that have safe church teams. According to data received from the *Yearbook* questionnaire and input from our safe church coordinators, 23 classes

have a safe church team (up from 12 last year). An additional 15 classes indicate that they are in the process of forming a team. Further, 28 classes indicated that they have a safe church coordinator (up from 24). The newly formed Classis North Cascades is not included in the data for this year. Classes that now have a safe church team are Alberta North, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, Chatham, Columbia, Georgetown, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Greater Los Angeles, Hackensack, Heartland, Hudson, Huron, Iakota, Kalamazoo, Minnkota, Muskegon, Niagara, Northern Michigan, Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain, Southeast U.S, and Yellowstone. *Note that safe church teams structure themselves in different ways, are of different sizes, and have varied levels of activity, experience, and expertise.* Several classes are in the process of team development, usually for one of two reasons. Either they have had an active team in the past, which has faded, and there is progress to revive it; or there is new interest in forming a team, and progress is under way. These include Classes Arizona, Atlantic Northeast, California South, Central Plains, Chicago South, Eastern Canada, Grand Rapids East, Grandville, Hamilton, Illiana, Lake Superior, Northern Illinois, Quinte, Toronto, and Zeeland. We are encouraged to see progress in safe church team development.

Synod 2019 adopted additional recommendations in response to a committee report on the abuse of power at all levels in the denomination. At the time of this writing, work has been done and progress has been made in several different committees assigned with addressing these recommendations. The committees have included various staff members, Council of Delegate members, and other volunteers with particular expertise. The committees will report to synod through the Council of Delegates.

In 2019, Safe Church recorded over 900 interactions with churches and individuals and consulted in over 50 different situations involving abuse. We offered a first-year stipend to five new safe church coordinators through our designated coordinator fund. In addition, we sponsored various safe church related initiatives through our mini-grant program in British Columbia, Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario. Safe Church continues to add and update resources for churches on our website and on The Network. Over 600 people receive our Safe Church newsletter every other month, and over 30 people have committed to pray for Safe Church using our monthly prayer guide.

Safe Church staff includes one full-time director, Bonnie Nicholas, and one part-time associate, Eric Kas, both based in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, office. Becky Jones works as our volunteer and communications specialist in the Burlington, Ontario, office. She works 10 hours per week for Safe Church and 20 hours per week for Disability Concerns. We are assisted by a volunteer advisory committee (six members), which seeks to reflect the diversity of the denomination with regard to location, nationality, gender, and ethnicity. We believe our mission calls all of us to keep working together. The majority of our work happens through safe church coordinators and team members in congregations and classes throughout North America. We are so thankful for each one! Pray with us for more people to find their calling by serving in safe church ministry.

Safe Church Ministry
Bonnie Nicholas, director

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

I. Introduction

The Office of Social Justice (OSJ) exists to help the CRCNA address the root causes of hunger, poverty, and oppression both around the world and in our own communities. It does this by raising awareness and educating members, integrating justice into worship as an expression of its core value for Reformed faith, and raising the voice of the CRCNA in advocacy for and with people who suffer injustice.

OSJ assists the CRC in responding to social justice issues identified by synod—primarily hunger and poverty, climate change, immigration and refugees, the sanctity of human life, religious persecution, and restorative justice.

The Office of Social Justice equips the CRC to “do justice” and participate in advocacy in three main ways: (1) through individuals or groups in congregations, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions, and (3) through ecumenical efforts and partnerships.

The Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice had its first meetings this year, beginning its work of assisting OSJ, as stated in its mandate, in “effectively addressing all relevant levels of U.S. government on significant and pressing issues of the day from an integrally biblical, theological, and confessional perspective, expressed in terms of a Reformed worldview, emphasizing whenever possible the official positions of the CRCNA as adopted by synod” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 45).

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Our primary calling area is *mercy and justice*, and our instructions from synod have focused on several primary issues to organize this work:

1. Hunger, poverty, and biblical social justice

- OSJ’s primary partner is World Renew—together we seek to ensure that concern for and solidarity with the poor is an integral part of the calling, worship, community, and identity of the Christian Reformed Church. We also partner with Bread for the World, Canadian Food Grains Bank, and other ecumenical organizations that specialize in a Christian response to hunger and poverty.
- OSJ’s unique role is to ensure that advocacy—changing the laws, policies, and systems that contribute to hunger and poverty—is one of the many ways that CRC congregations respond to God’s call to care for the poor. We offer education and opportunities for engagement through social media feeds, blogposts on *Do Justice* (dojustice.crcna.org), and congregational workshops and learning opportunities that focus on the role of policy-making in eliminating hunger’s root causes.
- In partnership with World Renew, we garnered over 500 messages to Congress on the importance of poverty-focused development assistance.
- OSJ partnered with World Renew to create the second printing of the small group Bible study *Live Justly*.

2. Climate change

- Our Climate Witness Project—a joint project with World Renew—has ten regional organizers across the United States and Canada to help equip CRC members in their region to learn about the realities of climate change, take steps to better steward resources, and advocate to their elected representatives.
- More than 120 churches are Climate Witness Partner churches.
- CRC members in both the U.S. and Canada had 35 legislative meetings with their elected representatives to urge strong action on climate change, as a matter of creation stewardship and love for our neighbors.
- Together with the Climate Witness Project’s regional representative, Henry Brouwer, OSJ offered a six-week Climate Care Series in Classis Hamilton.
- In partnership with several CRC churches across West Michigan, the Climate Witness Project helped organize the Cooler/Smarter workshop series. This was a seven-session workshop series designed to help individuals and families who wanted to get serious about reducing their carbon footprints. The workshop series brought together over 200 CRC members who made commitments to shrink their personal carbon footprints.

3. Immigration and refugees

- In 2019 more than 90 congregations across the U.S. partnered with OSJ to educate and equip themselves to engage in immigration and refugee justice.
- CRC members responded enthusiastically to action alerts in support of refugees and immigrants, with more than 10,299 online advocacy actions taken by people in both the U.S. and Canada.
- In the U.S. we partner with the RCA to equip six immigration organizers who support churches in their regions in loving and advocating with their immigrant neighbors. This team traveled to San Diego, California, and Tijuana, Mexico, for a mobilizing training trip in August, and they have facilitated, presented, and provided resources in their own contexts throughout 2019.
- CRC members across North America tuned in to OSJ’s “Immigration Is Our Story” audio series, which shared the immigration stories of six CRC/RCA members through StoryCorps-style interviews with loved ones. These stories were used to engage congregants in their own families’ immigration stories in our immigration workshops.
- More than 3,600 subscribers from CRC and RCA congregations across the U.S. received our monthly Immigration newsletter in 2019, which provided updates on worship resources, educational opportunities, advocacy actions, immigration news, and the regional mobilizing of congregations with regard to immigration, refugees, and biblical advocacy.
- Nearly 45 CRC congregations were represented at the “Rise for Refuge” event in August in support of a robust refugee resettlement program in the United States. Nearly 270 people participated,

70 postcards and 310 emails were written to elected officials, and dozens of participants signed up to mentor, support, and/or advocate for immigrants and refugees in their West Michigan communities.

- Pastors and congregants from more than 15 Iowa CRC churches engaged with OSJ on immigration and biblical advocacy in November through a pastors coffee hour, an immigration storytelling workshop, and a panel discussion on faith and immigration.
- Members of nearly 30 different CRC congregations across the country put their biblical call to “do justice” into action by participating in meetings with elected officials to advocate for just and humane U.S. immigration policies.

4. Sanctity of human life

- This year’s Sanctity of Human Life Sunday materials, which focused on the intersection of racism and abortion, were used in 322 churches.
- We shared regular posts and discussion about ending abortion and supporting people vulnerable to abortion via social media.
- We shared a series called “Pro-Mama” on our *Do Justice* blog, calling attention to the ways the church can support vulnerable women as a way of protecting the sanctity of human life.

5. Religious persecution

- We made available materials for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, which focused on the plight of Korean Christians.
- We shared regular posts and discussion about persecuted Christians and other religious minorities via social media.
- OSJ staff members were invited to join a gathering of women clergy in Israel and Palestine to better engage with Palestinian Christians, paid for by our partner Churches for Middle East Peace.
- More than 1,000 people read an article in our five-part *Do Justice* series on religious persecution around the globe.

6. Restorative justice

- We shared regular posts and discussion about mass incarceration, criminal justice reform, and restorative practices in criminal justice and in congregations via social media.
- OSJ’s director attended a one-day seminar on restorative practices conducted by Shalem Mental Health Network along with other denominational staff.

B. In addition, OSJ contributes to the CRC’s other calling areas:

1. Faith formation

OSJ naturally engages younger generations. This year we engaged in strong connections with young adults through immigration workshops in Christian elementary and middle schools, consulting with Christian high schools for engagement in social justice issues, growing youth engagement with *Do Justice*, encouraging young-adult leadership in the Climate

Witness Project, supporting youth-led justice initiatives like the Faith and International Development Conference at Calvin University, and expanding our social media coverage of timely issues. Young people make up the largest portion of our *Do Justice* audience: just under one third of our readers are under age 34, and more than 50 percent are under age 44.

Our regular e-newsletter, *OSJ News*, has a subscription list of almost 7,000 people and continues to grow. In it we offer ways to integrate justice and advocacy with the faith commitments of Christians—from worship and prayer to advocacy and education.

2. Servant leadership

Do Justice, a blog in partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue, is a diverse, Reformed space for thoughtful voices in the denomination about issues of justice and faith today. The blog specifically elevates the voices of marginalized people on justice issues. Of our 13 regular columnists, six are people of color. Overall, 34.5 percent of *Do Justice* writers are people of color.

The Climate Witness Project connected with several congregations about opportunities to add solar and other energy-saving measures to their buildings.

OSJ partnered with Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary, Faith Formation Ministries, World Renew, and five congregations to empower a group of young people to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C. The students visited with elected officials and learned about the value of using their own faith stories to advocate for justice.

3. Global mission

In partnership with World Renew, the Office of Social Justice helped congregations deepen their understanding of the impacts of the climate crisis through a film series and accompanying Bible study titled *Bangladesh: The Canary in the Coal Mine*.

For more than ten years OSJ has partnered with World Renew to equip churches to understand and seek justice by means of the Congregation Justice Mobilization (CJM) project, facilitated by a full-time coordinator. A part-time staff member in Canada also supports the CJM project in partnership with other Canadian ministries. The work of CJM helps to integrate advocacy and systemic-justice work into the spectrum of ways that CRC members are called to engage with poverty and injustice around the world.

Two members of the Climate Witness Project team, in partnership with the Christian Climate Observers Program (CCOP), were able to participate in intergovernmental climate talks in Madrid, Spain. During their visit they also joined with a local congregation for worship and a time of prayer for strength and wisdom for world leaders to act on climate change.

4. Gospel proclamation and worship

Our Advent devotional series—a joint effort with World Renew—continues to be our most widely read and shared publication, with over 3,700 subscribers this past year.

We offer fresh content for worship every week through *OSJ Prayers*, a weekly post on our *Do Justice* blog that highlights pressing justice issues from around the world, with written prayers appropriate for individuals, small groups, and congregations. These posts have a subscription list of more than 3,500 people and are viewed on the web by scores more.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

All of OSJ's work focuses on churches connecting with individual members, groups, or church leaders to better provide the resources needed to steward our power in ways that honor the dignity of people who are poor and marginalized. We do this through individual coaching and conversations, providing unique resources for unique requests, and connecting with partners on a myriad of issues.

Our most popular workshops, which were developed at synod's request and are regularly offered throughout the denomination, continue to be helpful to congregations seeking to take steps to engage in justice and advocacy.

- We offered 120 Church between Borders workshops in U.S. congregations this year, educating members about the process for immigrating, the history of immigration policy, Scripture's guidance in considering the issue of immigration, and how to raise a collective voice for justice.
- We shared the Journey with Me experience with two congregations, one Day of Encouragement gathering, and one Partnered Conference in Canada.
- Our Climate Witness Project, conducted in partnership with World Renew, worked with more than 400 congregational members in more than 60 CRC churches across the U.S. and Canada to respond to the biblical call to love our neighbors and be good stewards of creation through film screenings, legislative meetings, and energy efficiency.
- The Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy workshop, with CRC partners in Canada, has equipped over 200 CRC members to engage in biblical advocacy. On the basis of its success, we have adapted it for use in U.S. congregations for 2020.
- We also provide focused training and leadership development through the Blanket Exercise, Advocacy 101 workshops, and restorative justice consultations and trainings.

The Office of Social Justice, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, looks back with gratitude on a rewarding and productive year. We look forward to continuing to assist members of the CRC to become salt and light in the service of God's justice and mercy.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action
Reginald Smith, director

World Renew

I. Introduction

A. *Mandate*

In 1950 the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) was formally asked to “consider the advisability of appointing a Synodical Diaconal Committee” (*Acts of Synod 1950*, p. 63). By 1962, synod approved the formation of the denomination’s diaconal agency. Its 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.”

For 57 years World Renew has fulfilled this important diaconal mandate, reaching out in Christ’s name to people in need around the world. In its essence and existence, World Renew works to respond to God’s call for justice and mercy, for those who live in the daily grasp of extreme poverty, hunger, and disaster. Because we serve a God whose heart is most concerned with those who are oppressed, we seek to bring his renewed hope to a broken world.

B. *Mission and ministry*

We give thanks that in 2019 God’s awesome, unchanging power and glory were visible through World Renew’s work—in changed stories, improved futures, and transformed lives. As we worked with local church partners, many people who once struggled with poverty, hunger, and illness now testify to new hope and strengthened faith in God that continues to be nurtured through the church.

Your prayers, involvement, and support created opportunities, through 80 church and outreach partners, for a total of 918,663 participants in 31 countries to develop stories of new-found strength and hope. Many people experienced transformation at fundamental levels through World Renew because they encountered God’s truth about who they are in Jesus Christ.

Through community development programs in 1,330 communities, World Renew reached 241,154 participants in the key areas of food security, economic opportunity, community health, and peace and justice. They were able to build new health, agriculture, livelihood, and leadership skills that improved their living situations in the long term. World Renew was also active in disaster response in 24 countries in 2019, assisting 677,509 people with emergency food assistance, clean water, shelter, livelihood rehabilitation, and long-term home repair and rebuilding.

World Renew does not receive CRC ministry shares, but, rather, depends primarily on the generous donations and offerings of God’s people to support its mission in communities of poverty. In 2019, World Renew received more than \$28 million (USD) in gifts from generous individuals and churches. This work was supported by 2,784 volunteers from more than 36 church denominations who donated their time and gifts to people in need, totaling 243,196 hours of time, or the equivalent of 121 full-time employees. In Bangladesh, Honduras, Malawi, Madagascar, and Niger, 12 International Relief Managers volunteered their time to serve in places of greatest need.

Everywhere World Renew works, its goal is to help bring systemic, generational change in five key impact areas. We partner with local churches and organizations around the world to bring holistic programs that transform

communities in food security, economic opportunity, disaster response, community health, and peace and justice. Compelled by God's deep passion for justice and mercy, we work alongside partners and communities, building programs in every area of need, bringing renewed hope to a broken world. This holistic approach to World Renew's mandate, mission, and ministry contributes in various ways to each of the five core ministry priorities of the Christian Reformed Church: faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship.

Because of the integrated nature of World Renew's work in addressing the whole person, it touches all five of the CRC's ministry priorities but contributes mainly to the church's mercy and justice ministry and servant leadership development. World Renew's work is not only integrated; it is a fully fledged collaboration by the church of Jesus Christ with Christian partners who help people in need, advocate for justice, train local leaders, and develop biblically based community values that strengthen the message of the local church around the world.

In 2019, World Renew continued to fulfill its mission to "engage God's people in redeeming resources and developing gifts in collaborative activities of love, mercy, justice, and compassion." While the stories of men, women, and children around the world were touched by poverty, disaster, and injustice, the practical ministry of World Renew presented people with opportunities for renewed hope.

Through your prayers, involvement, and financial gifts, you helped World Renew to change the story of poverty so that thousands of people who own very little in this world now have the opportunity to change their lives for the better. And when people change their lives, they can influence others in their communities to make positive, permanent changes to their lives as well. God's love for us is infectious; his good and perfect gifts never fail. Thank you for your involvement that has helped to make these changes—and so much more—possible.

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17).

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith Formation

1. North America

a. Church and family education and classical support

In 2019, World Renew continued to build on existing relationships with churches and schools and created new connections with educators and church members. As in previous years, World Renew board delegates or staff attended a classis meeting, by-and-large once per year, to discuss World Renew's ministry. Through these conversations, which can take the shape of presentations from a podium or conversations around dinner tables, representatives also informed classes and churches about the agency's work and heard where classes and churches would like World Renew to focus its ministry.

World Renew also continued to develop relationships with deacons by cofacilitating workshops at various classis and congregational

meetings and providing information about interacting in both local and global communities. Several of these “Helping without Harm-ing” workshops were offered last year. In Canada, World Renew and Diaconal Ministries Canada have spent considerable amounts of time together developing structured ways to combine diaconal efforts and engagement, to the point where a memo of understanding has been developed. In the U.S., a church with community coordinator has been hired in collaboration with the Office of Social Justice and Pastor Church Resources to network and equip deacons and other church leaders to engage their communities in transformational practices.

Throughout 2019, World Renew’s church and community engagement team made opportunities to talk personally with churches. Staff, board delegates, and ambassadors met with deacons, council members, and pastors. There were also many opportunities for team members to speak during church services and during various church-related events and activities (small groups, Sunday school, youth groups) to share about the work of World Renew. With respect to church and family education, the World Renew annual gift catalog continues to create new resources that both churches and families can use. These not only increase support for World Renew’s work but also provide educational tools for Sunday schools and families.

The church and community engagement team continued to create an extensive variety of workshops that are available to churches and subchurch groups across North America. Topics for these workshops included evaluating mission trips, understanding poverty, living out justice, learning about disaster response, and walking with refugees. Currently 17 workshops are available for churches and church groups to use. The team has been developing a list of regionally available speakers for churches, subchurch groups, schools, and individuals. The response to these workshop offerings has been very positive. The church and community engagement team has also continued to develop webinars on specific topics.

b. Christian schools, colleges, and universities

Dynamic, vibrant, and growing connections between Christian Schools International (CSI) institutions and World Renew are forming and bearing fruit educationally, spiritually, and financially. Last year World Renew staff visited 82 schools. Many schools also connected with World Renew’s work through our gift catalog, which they used for learning and raising support. World Renew staff made 39 academic presentations on poverty and disaster in elementary, middle, and high schools. World Renew staff also facilitated workshops at several educator’s conventions in 2019.

The King’s University in Edmonton, Alberta, has an emeritus staff member who is supported by World Renew and is instrumental in initiating various constituent events in northern Alberta. World Renew’s Canada director also continues to teach a course on community development at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

In response to a request from schools, World Renew is again facilitating an educator’s learning event in July 2020; the ten-day event in

2019 was particularly successful for Christian educators. Students, particularly those in the senior grades, are involved in implementing justice and advocacy initiatives as they work through *Live Justly*, a study guide available in U.S. and Canadian versions. World Renew will continue to deepen these partnerships and facilitate more learning opportunities in the year ahead.

c. Refugee Office, Canada

In Canada, World Renew's Refugee Program has the privilege of supporting sponsoring churches and groups from coast to coast as they welcome refugees to their communities and walk alongside them during their resettlement.

Over the past fiscal year, 47 Christian Reformed Churches across Canada welcomed 206 refugees through the refugee program. World Renew is grateful for the many ways that churches have extended a generous welcome to displaced individuals and families seeking safety and a new life in Canada.

The global refugee crisis continues to worsen, and there are now over 70.8 million displaced people around the world living mainly in developing countries. The demand for sponsorship remains very high. World Renew receives requests for sponsorships from many different church agencies and individuals from around the world seeking to find solutions for the many refugees in need of protection. It is heartening to see the enthusiasm from Christian Reformed churches in response to this need as this important work continues to be strong in Canada.

2019 marked the 40th anniversary of the Private Refugee Sponsorship Program in Canada and, with it, the 40th anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada's involvement in refugee sponsorship. Celebration events took place in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Churches, sponsored refugees, and communities came together to remember how new friendships were formed and to give thanks to God for his faithfulness in bringing communities together and offering hope and peace to many refugees.

For Rick DeGraff, an event organizer and a member of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario, the events were an opportunity for both sponsors and refugees to tell their welcome stories: "The celebration of the World Renew refugee program in Ontario not only allowed us to give thanks as sponsors; it allowed the families we brought to Canada to say thank-you in a special way. . . . It affirms that the church can be a relevant community that embraces people who have lost every everything and gives them a new start."

2. International volunteer opportunities

More than 500 global volunteers participated in justice and compassion ministries with World Renew in 2019. Their presence in communities of poverty and disaster was a catalyst for change in their own hearts and in the hearts of the communities where they lived and worked. Their testimonies are a powerful witness to the formation of their own faith in the context of global ministry.

In 2019, World Renew's service opportunities placed people in relationships where they can build each other up, learning and sharing together.

By relating to those who live in poverty as God's imagebearers, people of faith truly serve others. While serving, they grow in Christ, who changes stories by his power and grace.

B. Servant leadership

Servant leadership is considered a key outcome of World Renew's activities. World Renew's ministry addresses the pain of a hurting world as the corporate expression of the office of deacon in the church. As such, World Renew raises up and equips servant leaders locally and globally to develop and exercise their gifts so that they can minister in their community, nation, and world.

1. Global Volunteer Program

World Renew's Global Volunteer Program (GVP) offers opportunities for collaborative learning through international internships and long-term volunteer placements. GVP placed 511 volunteers in ministry positions in 2019, offering a variety of opportunities to serve and learn while deepening their relationships with Christ and others.

There are individual placements for people to use their gifts and skills in communities in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Focusing on congregations, World Renew's Global Partnership Program brings together churches that are seeking to develop lasting, in-depth relationships with other Christians internationally.

International opportunities for student and youth groups provided volunteers with one-week service-learning trips. This included the Embark discipleship program and short-term opportunities for individuals and teams. Young adults also engaged in college semester programs and three- to six-month immersion opportunities.

2. Disaster response volunteer programs

a. International relief managers

Each year, individuals choose to serve Christ through volunteering with World Renew's international relief manager (IRM) Program. These volunteers are highly specialized and provide management support to World Renew and local partner organizations in the context of international disaster work.

In 2019, 12 IRMs served in Madagascar, Bangladesh, Honduras, Niger, and Malawi. In Madagascar, IRMs worked with a local organization to implement a project that provided food to 1,350 families experiencing significant drought and crop failure. In Bangladesh, IRMs contributed to World Renew's response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, helping to provide food assistance to over 60,000 refugees. In Malawi, more than 2,500 families were affected by Cyclone Idai last year. World Renew IRMs helped to support the distribution of immediate food assistance, as well as maize and bean seeds to plant for the next harvest. Each family also received a goat.

Without the support of IRMs in these and other countries around the world, these World Renew responses to international disasters could not have taken place. We are incredibly grateful for the service of our IRMs, who continue to make the ministry of World Renew possible.

b. World Renew Disaster Response Services volunteers in North America

World Renew's Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers gave their time and talents to help clear debris, assess needs, and rebuild homes after disasters in North America last year. DRS volunteers from the U.S. and Canada connected with more than 2,300 households in 53 communities to assess their needs. DRS volunteers also rebuilt 290 damaged homes, helping to give families new living spaces and new hope in Christ.

World Renew DRS volunteers are general and skilled laborers, building estimators, construction supervisors, plumbers, electricians, cooks, site managers, and regional, project, and area managers who donate their specific experience and skills to the ministry.

DRS volunteers continue to respond to communities still recovering from six major hurricanes that hit the Gulf and East Coasts of the United States in the past few years—Hurricane Matthew in 2016; Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017; and Hurricanes Florence and Michael in 2018. World Renew DRS completed its response to Hurricane Matthew in 2019 and celebrated this milestone with thankfulness to God.

DRS volunteers helped “elderly widows who were trying to safely navigate warped, uneven flooring in their homes two years after Hurricane Michael struck Florida,” shares DRS director Bob Laarman. “We fixed homes for single parents with little kids who were sick because black mold was growing in their home. We built wheelchair ramps for veterans who were struggling to get in and out of their houses.”

3. International development programs

World Renew's international development programs are strengthened through their implementation by servant leaders from Christian partners and churches in local communities. World Renew comes alongside these partners in ways that strengthen their capacity to lead transformation in their communities. This includes strengthening organizational and board capacity, coaching in nonprofit management and governance, facilitating monitoring and evaluation, and promoting accountability and transparency.

Leaders who follow Jesus Christ, reflecting a servant's heart in their work in their churches and communities, mobilize local congregations to become catalysts for change. World Renew works to empower its partners, pastors, and laypeople so that they are equipped to organize and implement their own community development, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

C. *Global mission*

Though World Renew's work around the world falls primarily into the ministry priority of mercy and justice, it is work done in the context of global mission. World Renew works alongside other CRC agencies, as well as other churches and denominational partners, to accompany each other into the daily living of local communities. While World Renew supports the work of CRC agencies in many countries, we also take an ecumenical approach to our partnerships, extending far beyond traditional CRC relationships. Our disaster response work in Zambia represents collaboration between many churches and denominations.

In Zambia, World Renew works with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), a 15-member organization working to end global hunger and to help alleviate hunger related to the recent drought. In fall 2019 the United Church of Canada (UCC)—a member of CFGB—joined with World Renew to reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and increase food security for 4,000 of the most vulnerable families struggling through the drought crisis in Zambia.

Through CFGB, the UCC is sharing over \$874,000 (CDN) for World Renew's drought response project in Zambia. Working with the United Church of Zambia, a World Renew and UCC partner, this project is addressing local challenges of undernutrition and poverty for the people of the west Zambia province of Mwandwi. A monthly ration of maize meal, millet flour, beans, oil, and salt meets immediate nutritional concerns and increases communities' daily food intake. A distribution of millet and cowpea seeds to 4,000 households for the next planting season will address longer-term hunger needs.

A community leader in the tiny, remote village of Kalundu greeted World Renew workers with touching words of gratitude: "The people of Kalundu . . . are grateful for your reappearance in the field, for people were really in need of assistance. You are God-sent; you make us recall . . . when Jesus fed the 5,000." Thanks to the gifts and prayers of believers here in North America, Zambian communities know that God has not forgotten them, and they have found provision for their families and hope for rain.

Dr. Peggy Mulambya Kabonde, general secretary of the United Church of Zambia, stated, "We are so very grateful to have two partners in World Renew and the United Church of Canada who can come to the assistance of Zambians at their time of need." World Renew gives thanks for these special relationships that have allowed us to work together as united organizations to provide food assistance to 24,000 people in Mwandwi.

In every place where World Renew works, we partner with Christian denominations and community organizations to reach out to communities with the greatest needs. We are grateful to work with these partners to improve ministry capacity and to create opportunities for people to lift themselves out of poverty.

D. Mercy and justice

The CRCNA formally acknowledges mercy and justice as integral to its mission, vision, and calling. In World Renew's global ministry of community development and disaster response, mercy and justice are inseparable in experiencing the wholeness that God intends for all people, particularly for those who contend with extreme poverty, hunger, and the effects of disaster.

In all areas of our work, World Renew relies on God's mercy and justice to renew hope for people around the world. God has graciously chosen us to continue the healing work of Jesus Christ as we await his return and the full reconciliation of the creation to God.

1. International community development

In 2019, World Renew touched the lives of more than 240,000 people in impoverished communities around the world. World Renew's community-based programs in food security, community health, economic opportunity training, and peace and justice helped families and individuals improve their way of life where the basic essentials of life, such as food, healthcare, and education, are often out of reach.

As an essential part of our work, World Renew helps toward providing greater economic opportunity for families through our Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program. World Renew facilitated 400 VSL groups with 10,000 participants in 18 countries. The main goal of this program is to provide financial stability for families by forming community savings and loan groups, which help families gain access to goods, services, resources such as loans, and markets needed to create livelihoods and to provide life's essentials. In these groups, 15 to 30 members make weekly savings deposits into a group fund. They then manage the funds themselves, making decisions about the amount of each loan and helping one another find long-term economic stability. Often, the activities of the VSL groups are integrated with other key areas of impact, such as community health or food security, to provide a holistic approach to poverty alleviation.

In Haiti, World Renew's village savings and loan groups are being integrated by creating economic opportunities for women, who are particularly vulnerable in times of hunger and disaster. World Renew's VSL activities provide loans for women to build their own small businesses and to improve their families' food security. Mireille is one woman whose life has been transformed by this powerful tool.

Mireille is a 56-year-old mother of five children, and she lives in Coraille village in the Leogane area of Haiti. She supports her family by selling rice, sugar, corn, and beans at a nearby market. She is also a member of a World Renew-supported VSLA.

Mireille and her neighbors save money together in a joint savings account, and they can take out small loans with low interest rates and flexible payment terms. Mireille has made huge changes in her life since becoming part of World Renew's VSLA program. "I have been approved for three loans since I started saving money with my group," she said. "I invested it in my business, and it is growing. For the first time, I can feed my children at least twice a day. I am very happy."

Mireille and her group offer each other a strong support network that includes group activities and social events. This broad base of encouragement and accountability helps assure their success. Her family is not only improving their way of life; their community is improving also.

"Women are not entirely dependent on their husbands for income anymore," she said. "Many women in my group now own small businesses of their own, as well. I want to thank World Renew for their commitment to Coraille. I am excited about our future."

World Renew's economic opportunity programs such as village savings and loan groups are powerful catalysts for change because they empower the most vulnerable to make decisions for themselves and to invest in their families' needs. Living in the grip of extreme poverty without banks and other essential services means choices are limited or nonexistent for people in some of the poorest communities in the world. But because of World Renew, thousands of people like Mireille are learning their own value as children of God as they grow in their skills and faith.

2. Disaster response

a. International disaster response

In 2019 more than 70 million people were displaced by conflict, persecution, or disaster. World Renew's International Disaster Response team provided support to many communities worldwide that were affected by these disasters. Women and girls, the elderly, and people with disabilities experienced the effects of many of these crises most strongly. In a world broken by sin, World Renew is privileged to be the hands and feet of Christ in such times of great need. Through the generous support of churches, individuals, organizations, and institutions, World Renew provided assistance to over 677,000 people in 24 countries. The following stories give a glimpse of how faithful prayers and generous support equip World Renew to bring the justice and mercy of Christ to families in crisis.

Amina remembers the life her five daughters once had in Syria—full bellies, a home with olive trees, and a garden. They could play and go to school like any other children. Now war has taken all of that away. As refugees in Lebanon, the girls no longer live in a war zone, but because they are noncitizens, they cannot go to regular schools.

Amina's oldest three daughters (ages 9, 12, and 13) help to support the family as housekeepers or by picking beans alongside their mother. Amina knows her daughters are too young to be working, but the family is barely surviving. Conflict, poverty, and hunger force Syrian families like Amina's to send their children to work. Some parents marry off their young daughters, fearing for their safety. Amina's heart yearns for a better life for her girls.

But World Renew's local church partners in Lebanon are sharing the love of Christ and making all the difference. With this support, Amina and her girls receive food, milk, and other basic necessities. The church also runs an education center so that refugee children can continue their education. Today there is hope for Amina and her daughters as they begin to rebuild their lives. "We are happy with the help that we are getting from the church," shares Amina. "We are thankful for the diapers, milk, and food box—and an education."

When Jeremy Benjamin, a Canadian singer-songwriter, learned about World Renew's work in Nigeria, he was inspired. Violence has forced millions of Nigerians to leave their homes and livelihoods in search of safety. For these displaced families, the challenges of daily life are enormous. Without reliable sources of income, many cannot afford to feed themselves adequately. In 2019, through a Christian partner, World Renew provided 1,200 families with enough cash each month to give them the ability to buy what they needed most. Further, World Renew also provided trauma healing workshops for victims of religious persecution and ongoing internal violence in Nigeria.

World Renew's work in Nigeria inspired Jeremy Benjamin to share stories of transformation with communities in North America from coast to coast, raising money so that World Renew can continue to provide this critical assistance to conflict survivors. By the end of the *I Am Not My Own* tour in the summer of 2019, World Renew had received

\$126,300 (CDN) from the tour, which was designated for World Renew's food security work in Nigeria through CFGB and other partners, as well as for trauma healing. CFGB matched half of these funds 4-to-1, creating a total of \$375,900 (CDN) in ministry dollars.

Throughout the tour (2018-2019), concerts were held at more than 60 churches over 60 weekends. The tour included 150 events and covered 31,000 kilometers of travel. In addition, over 20,000 voices were recorded onto the "I Am Not My Own" track of Benjamin's most recent album. He and his family visited nine of Canada's ten provinces and sang and played at more than 25 percent of all the CRCs in Canada. The impact of this tour on both people in Nigeria and people in Canada has been inestimable, and World Renew is deeply grateful for Benjamin's efforts and support.

Because of the heartfelt and generous support of Christian Reformed churches, church members, and fellow believers in Christ, World Renew has helped to change stories of poverty, grief, and loss into countless stories of hope. We enter 2020 with grateful hearts for all that God has accomplished.

b. Disaster Response Services in North America

In 2019, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) continued to provide volunteer-based assistance in over 50 communities affected by disaster in North America. DRS volunteers traveled to disaster sites to help survivors who were income-limited, disabled, elderly, or otherwise unable to recover on their own, and to help them return to safe, secure housing. The volunteers helped more than 290 homeowners repair, rebuild, or clean up their disaster-damaged homes. The following are messages from World Renew DRS participants whose lives have been changed.

A woman from Dickenson, Texas, whose house was damaged by Hurricane Harvey, left a note: "You don't just fix houses; you helped restore my spirit and gave me hope. Never underestimate the fantastic things you bring to others. Please tell everyone on your crew that there are not enough words to say thank-you!"

Reporting on a needs assessment in Florida after Hurricane Michael, a DRS volunteer wrote: "A woman came back on the last day of the assessment. She raced in, hugged me, and said that since we prayed together earlier that week, she felt a renewed relationship with the Lord. She now knew that she had the strength, with God's help, to move forward."

Through the prayers, involvement, and financial gifts from the Christian Reformed Church and its church members, many people who are struggling to recover from a disaster are now experiencing hope. DRS volunteers not only rebuild roofs, walls, and floors, but they also give people a glimpse of the strength and dignity they will find in the God who loves them.

3. Mobilizing churches for justice

As a CRC agency, World Renew shares in the calling to mobilize congregations to faithfully and effectively pursue "God's justice and peace in every area of life." In 2019, 258 churches in both Canada and the U.S. were involved in justice activities with World Renew. World Renew

collaborated closely with the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice to support churches in addressing justice issues in relation to community outreach, poverty alleviation, equity and reconciliation, climate adaptation, peace building, and refugee and immigration policies.

a. United States

In 2019 the U.S. Congregational Justice Mobilization (CJM) partnered with the CRC Office of Social Justice to support 180 congregations, especially in the areas of energy stewardship, creation care, and immigrant and refugee rights, deepening one another's understanding of systemic causes of poverty and advocating on behalf of those who suffer injustice worldwide.

On the topic of creation care, the Climate Witness Project (CWP) mobilized members across the U.S. and Canada to take action to reduce their own energy footprints and to meet with local policy makers to encourage policies that would care for creation at both local and national levels. CWP also empowered an intergenerational group to see the impacts of climate change in person in Eastern Africa, to see how communities in this region are responding, and to return and teach their own communities about what they learned. In response to global climate impacts, sixty member churches of the CWP took action by leading engagement activities in their own communities.

Two members of the CWP team, in partnership with the Christian Climate Observers Program, were able to participate in intergovernmental climate talks in Madrid, Spain. There they also joined with a local congregation for worship and a time of prayer for strength and wisdom for world leaders to act on climate change.

On the topic of biblical social justice, World Renew ran a second printing of the small group study guide titled *Live Justly*. This book leads groups through a journey of growing in the spiritual discipline of social justice as it relates to generosity, advocacy, prayer, creation care, integral mission, and building relationships.

Through a partnership with Accord and the Gates Foundation, World Renew mobilized churches to deliver over 500 messages to Congress, along with in-person meetings, on the importance of poverty-focused development assistance. Participants in the meetings highlighted the work of World Renew with their elected officials and invited their elected officials to strengthen the impact of assistance programs.

b. Justice mobilization Canada

World Renew in Canada is working with the CRC Office of Social Justice, the Centre for Public Dialogue, Diaconal Ministries Canada, and the Canadian Ministries director's office to jointly support a justice mobilizer position. The justice mobilizer successfully completed the three-year pilot for this role, which has now transitioned into a permanent position for justice mobilization in Canada.

Currently the justice mobilizer in Canada is seeking out and nurturing regional and/or congregational justice champions and investing time in listening, coaching, and equipping with resources. The justice mobilizer is working to identify people who are passionate

and effective leaders in the area of justice in churches and regions across Canada. This will help to offer better training and increase their capacity and to give us a ready network of leaders with whom to share justice resources and campaigns. It will also result in better contact and solidarity between people doing justice work regionally, decreasing a sense of isolation and reducing burnout.

The justice mobilizer is also facilitating and organizing regional justice training events. There were 27 justice training events in 2019. These ranged from biblical advocacy workshops that occurred in three provinces and saw advocacy letters sent to dozens of Members of Parliament on issues such as refugee justice, equality for Indigenous education, better support for homelessness, and food security / international aid through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In addition, the justice mobilizer partnered with the Climate Witness Project by supporting Henry Brouwer as he led a six-week climate care lecture series at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario. These events had a record high of attendees (128 throughout the series) from over 23 local churches (about half of which were non-CRC).

The justice mobilizer is leading the pilot project of a Justice and Reconciliation Community of Practice. In this pilot project we want to offer clarity on our calling to pursue justice and reconciliation, to become peacemakers in our everyday lives, and to learn how to do so together practically as we embark on the community-of-practice journey to deepen our mutual understanding and experiences of justice and reconciliation. It is our hope that this twofold approach of *learning* and *practice* will organically become a tool that our Justice and Reconciliation Team can use to coach and mobilize CRC leaders—with the anticipated result that they, in turn, will be able to engage their congregations and regions in the mission and spiritual disciplines of justice, advocacy, mercy, and reconciliation, leading to a greater justice-keeping and peace-making identity within the CRC in Canada. This project is currently at the halfway mark in 2020, and we hope to evaluate and duplicate this model for future use.

A new Justice 101 workshop resource was developed in 2019 and piloted in the fall at a Day of Encouragement event. With some updates, we hope to launch it in spring 2020. This workshop is designed to help churches demystify justice by exploring how the Bible talks about peace and justice, showing how sin leads to injustice, identifying how charity and justice are both valuable but different, and exploring how advocacy and reconciliation are part of how we are called to be peacemakers and doers of justice. Through open discussions on the work being done in local Christian communities to address not only the symptoms of injustice but also the systems and structures that cause it, participants will make personal plans on how they can each take action to do justice!

The Canadian version of the Biblical Advocacy workshop was launched in spring 2019, was downloaded 57 times during the year, and was facilitated in six churches / conferences. The justice mobilizer has been working with the Office of Social Justice to adapt it for use within the U.S. context, aiming for a launch in spring / summer 2020.

c. International justice

World Renew's mandate to alleviate suffering in the world is based on principles of biblical mercy and justice. In justice education, we create opportunities for teaching and learning that are implemented through existing church networks to advance the rights of each person. This includes advocacy action, servant leadership, peace building, and trauma healing.

In Uganda, World Renew is building peace and justice in places of conflict such as the Bidi Bidi refugee camp, where South Sudanese refugees have taken shelter from the war in their country. Phial Dubula Gak, who grew up in South Sudan and fled to the Bidi Bidi refugee camp in Uganda, had used violence to engage with his community and to express himself because that was the only example he had ever seen from leaders in his community background. But when Dubula was chosen to participate in World Renew's trauma healing and peace building training, he started learning another kind of leadership. Through World Renew, Dubula saw how peace building and serving people with compassion and integrity can change a community for good. He also realized that perpetuating stereotypes and prejudice against other tribes is harmful and hurts innocent people.

Now Dubula is a vice youth representative in the Council of the Refugee Welfare System in the Bidi Bidi refugee camp. An eloquent and intelligent young man, Dubula has become known for his courage and kindness. He also serves as a bridge builder and change maker, speaking not only the language of his own tribe but also that of the neighboring Kakwa tribe.

In Uganda and many countries across the world, World Renew seeks to encourage community development based on peace, justice, and equity for every person. Overcoming the trauma, violence, and injustices of the past is critical for individuals and communities to heal and become whole.

E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

In communities where the gospel can be preached freely, World Renew openly integrates its Christian faith into its work. In contexts where Christianity is not recognized or welcomed, World Renew establishes common ground through values training that is rooted in our faith, often bringing the first glimpse of salvation into hearts, homes, and communities where hope seems lost.

By working with churches and partners globally, World Renew strengthens both local churches and their denominational structures through essential training that increases ministry outreach capacity and the proclamation of the gospel. In some communities, World Renew works collaboratively with Resonate Global Mission and other CRC agencies worldwide, opening the door to a greater ministry presence through community outreach in development and disaster-response programming.

In other communities, World Renew uses a variety of resources to strengthen churches and community partners through Bible-based teaching. In Niger, World Renew works with churches to empower families to pursue new economic opportunities through village savings and loan groups. For

communities that recently experienced violent persecution, they continued to proclaim the gospel while helping their neighbors overcome poverty.

When a local church in Niger started their partnership with World Renew, they had no idea how much of an impact they would make in their community. In 2015 they had suffered as part of a two-day spree of persecution in which their church building was burned down and their local community became sharply divided. In response, the church organized a village savings and loan association. They hoped to help the whole community to recover.

It was a generous act of hope, and it became a powerful catalyst for change. A woman named Gadji credits the VSLA's solidarity fund—a loan set up for emergencies—with saving her grandson Moussa's life: "Moussa's health was declining rapidly. My husband was very discouraged, saying, 'We will lose him; he will die.' I told my husband that I would go get some money from our group. . . . [Then at] the hospital, we followed the treatment plan, and our grandson was healed!"

Taking out a solidarity loan meant that Gadji and her husband could seek life-saving treatment for Moussa at the regional hospital. Their story is one of hundreds. Today the local church has expanded their reach to include other programs, such as peace building, justice advocacy, and literacy. Once victims of violence, this community of believers is now sharing Christ's love by giving renewed hope to their neighbors.

World Renew's integrated programs represent the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, helping people in need through practical interventions in the key areas of food security, economic opportunity, peace and justice, disaster response, and community health—and they also point participants to the saving grace of the Savior who loves them.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

A. World Renew church relations program

1. Offerings

World Renew does not receive ministry shares from Christian Reformed churches but depends on the generosity of members and congregations who give toward five synodically designated Sunday offerings each year. In 2019 these denominationally approved offerings included the World Hunger Campaign, the Gift Catalog Campaign, Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CDN)/DRS Sunday, Free A Family®/Maternal and Child Health Sunday (CDN), and Thanksgiving Day offerings (CDN, U.S.).

2. Reaching and growing into constituency beyond the CRC

In 57 years of ministry World Renew has engaged with and blessed many people around the world, from participants to constituents to others involved in the work. As World Renew has grown in vision and scope, it is necessary that the work of this CRC agency is shared, structurally and intentionally, with people beyond our denomination.

In 2019, World Renew continued to develop its strategic planning and research initiative to increase denominational diversity among constituents and partners. The Church and Community Engagement teams in both the U.S. and Canada each have a full-time staff person devoted to increasing participation among "Beyond CRC" (bCRC) churches.

In addition, World Renew continues to partner officially with the Reformed Church in America and the Covenant Order of Evangelical (ECO) Presbyterians.

The goal for World Renew's bCRC program is to identify, connect, and engage bCRC churches with the mission and vision of World Renew, thereby creating long-term church partners in DRS and international program ministries. Church and Community Engagement is working to achieve this goal by doing the following:

- identifying and qualifying partners in the Reformed Church in America, ECO (in the U.S.), independent churches in both the U.S. and Canada, and churches with a history of World Renew Disaster Response Services involvement
- finding networks and partnerships that would lead us to churches and denominations with at least similar organizational structures
- looking for "cluster groups" of receptive churches where our efforts will be most efficient
- creating awareness through marketing, personal contacts, meetings, and conferences of partner denominations and groups
- sharing resources, curriculum, presentations, and access to speakers that provide avenues for education and advocacy for churches that share this affinity

World Renew believes that our ministries help people who live in the deepest levels of poverty to flourish through local Asset-Based Community Development partners, and that our ministries help to provide a necessary response to victims of disaster, so we want to expand these resources to like-minded churches outside the CRC base.

World Renew is also a member of several international collaborative networks, including the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Growing Hope Globally, ACT Alliance, and Integral Alliance. These networks provide access to funding and grants from donors beyond the CRC who also support other member organizations in these networks.

3. Events

Throughout 2019, World Renew's church and community engagement team was involved in nine conferences and workshops beyond those planned and implemented by CRC churches or classes, including the Global Leadership Summit, the Hunger Walk, the Calvin University Faith and International Development Conference, the Jubilee Conference, the Wild Goose Festival, the Christian Community Development Association annual conference, and conventions for Christian Schools International.

4. Church engagement highlights

The Global Engagement Opportunities (GEO) program seeks to bring the work of World Renew to life for congregations in a meaningful way. There are currently more than 200 active GEO partnerships in North America. With regard to countries and projects in which World Renew works, the GEO program offers churches in-depth information in the following ways:

- GEO offers opportunities for groups to learn more about geographical, political, and other relevant issues in a country they support.
- GEO provides a deeper understanding of how donated funds are put to work.
- GEO updates groups regularly on their chosen region, allowing a more personal relationship with staff in the field and ongoing prayer for the team.
- GEO sends field staff on visits to participating churches so that they can learn firsthand from experts about the work they are partnering in.
- GEO is a great first step toward considering participation in the Global Partnership Program, in which congregations in North America structurally interact with, learn from, and serve congregations and communities in global locations.

In 2019 a dozen Connections tours took place, featuring field staff from all five World Renew ministry teams. These team members participated in approximately 150 visits to churches, schools, and communities across the U.S. and Canada. The GEO team focus in 2019 was to maintain continuity in the program even as a number of field staff transitions took place. In 2020 the GEO team is continuing to plan Connections with churches who appreciate that deeper relationship with the work of World Renew through church services, social events, learning nights, potlucks, school visits, and more.

World Renew

Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew-Canada

Calvin Theological Seminary

I. Introduction – Mission Statement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this report to Synod 2020 with gratitude to God for his provision through the past year. The seminary has experienced God’s faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

Calvin Theological Seminary has been involved in the training and teaching of students for ministry for 144 years since 1876 and was the first agency or institution developed by the Christian Reformed Church.

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. Reflecting on Our Calling (CRCNA ministry priorities)

Over the past number of years, 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 Dig (formerly Facing Your Future), a program for high school students, to its 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 over 25 different nations (this past year nearly 35 percent of our degree-seeking students came from outside the U.S. and Canada) are represented in the student body of Calvin Theological Seminary. 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, which helps to form preachers and teachers of the gospel. This past year we were able to secure long-term funding for our Center for Excellence in Preaching and gained authorization to launch a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree in the summer of 2020 that continues this formation process for practitioners in ministry.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)*

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 Geoff Vandermolen and administrative coordinator Chris Wright, continues to develop partnerships to help bridge the classroom and the church.

The following organizations and churches are part of this concurrent, contextual learning approach: Ada CRC, Ada, Mich.; Blythefield CRC, Rockford, Mich.; Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, Mich.; Calvary Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Calvin CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Campus Ministry at GVSU,

Allendale, Mich.; Central Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Christ Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, Mich.; The Community Church, Ada, Mich.; Creston CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Encounter, Kentwood, Mich.; Evergreen Ministries, Hudsonville, Mich.; Faith Community CRC, Wyoming, Mich.; First CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Fuller Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Hanbit CRC, Rolling Hills, Mich.; Heritage CRC, Byron Center, Mich.; inSpirit Church, Byron Center, Mich.; InterVarsity, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Korean Bible Church, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Lee Street CRC, Wyoming, Mich.; Living Water CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Madison North, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Madison Square Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Mayfair Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; River Rock Church, Rockford, Mich.; Second CRC, Byron Center, Mich.; Tabernacle Community Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Westview CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.

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 number of churches that have served as “additional” places of formation, including these cross-cultural and international sites: David’s House, Wyoming, Mich.; Iglesia de Dios, Las Vegas, Nev.; Mel Trotter Ministries, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Mosaic Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Shenandoah National Park (A Christian Ministry in the National Parks), Va.; Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada (A Christian Ministry in the National Parks), Alta.; and Women’s and Ethnic Ministry, CRCNA, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Calvin Theological Seminary also offers continuing education opportunities throughout the year that are open to pastors and lay leaders alike. Many of these opportunities are presented through the Center for Excellence in Preaching led by director Rev. Scott Hoezee.

In January 2020 Calvin Theological Seminary hired Rev. Shawn Brix as its first Canadian Church Relations Liaison (CCRL). The CCRL is a “pastor-ambassador” who builds and strengthens bridges between Calvin Theological Seminary and Canadian churches and ministries. This newly created position is a part of Calvin Theological Seminary’s strong commitment to serving churches in Canada and seeking to imagine and build new partnerships and initiatives. This connecting, listening, and serving role will help Calvin Theological Seminary be more present and available to serve leaders and churches in Canada. Since his ordination in 1995, Rev. Brix has served congregations in Acton and Burlington, Ontario, and he most recently served at Living Hope CRC in Peterborough, Ontario.

IV. Additional program and ministry highlights

In October 2019 the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees approved two key initiatives:

1. The expansion of our Ph.D. program into New Testament studies as a result of gaining key funding for The Deppe Family Doctoral Chair in New Testament as well as scholarships for Ph.D. students. The Ph.D. program began in 1992 and has served in the formation of leaders for the global church.
2. The distinctives or values of our soon to be launched Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree that will focus on applied, contextual learning for a diverse community of practitioners to develop advanced ministry

leadership skills and spiritual formation. The webpage for this program can be found at calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry.

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 continue to be blessed by strong support for our hybrid education Master of Divinity Degree program. In fall 2019, 16 new students joined the program, allowing them to remain where they are while receiving a Calvin Theological Seminary education. The launch of the distance education M.Div. degree has created significant interest in Calvin Theological Seminary, and we can now add this to our distance delivery format that includes our M.A. and M.T.S. degree programs. Over 25 percent of our degree-seeking students receive their education through a hybrid (distance and online) or completely online format.

We are excited to announce that our M.A. in ministry leadership degree can be completed entirely online. This streamlined degree is designed for emerging Christian leaders who want to focus their training in a key area of ministry. Students can choose from a variety of delivery formats, including online access so that students can enjoy the life-changing benefits of a Calvin Theological Seminary education while never needing to leave their home community, work, and ministry. This new delivery system will also be helpful in developing certification programs that will expand the scope of theological training to church workers and church leaders. To learn more about this, visit calvinseminary.edu/ma.

In fall 2019 the Latino/a ministry program, under the direction of Calvin Theological Seminary professor Mariano Avila, launched two new cohorts in its certificate program. One certificate is in Latino ministry, and the other is in family care. There is even a pathway to an M.A. in family care for students who complete both certificates along with Clinical Pastoral Education through a partnership with Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services. We have twenty-four students currently enrolled in these certificate programs.

The seminary is grateful for 241 degree-seeking students enrolled in the fall semester of 2019-2020, including 113 new students, of which 27 are M.Div. students (18 residential and nine in the distance education program). At the same time we urge the churches to encourage and support women and men who seek additional training for ministry to consider Calvin Theological Seminary.

As we continue to develop ministries and programs to serve the church, Calvin Theological Seminary notes that it is working with the CRC Candidacy Committee to survey key stakeholders to evaluate the goals and effectiveness of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). It is anticipated that a report on the background, growth, and proposed adjustments to the EPMC program will be provided to Synod 2020 through the Candidacy Committee report.

The following data for the Center for Excellence in Preaching demonstrates the reach of its ministry and illustrates that it is one of the premier Reformed preaching websites:

Average different pastors visiting per month: 12,000 to 14,000
Pageviews in 2019: 500,000
Sessions/visits: 220,000 (about 20,000 per month)

Calvin Theological Seminary, through the Center for Excellence in Preaching directed by Scott Hoezee, received a sustainability grant (2018-2021) from Lilly Endowment Inc. for \$250,000 that will be matched by the Center's budget. This follows a four-year \$500,000 grant program from Lilly that funded an average of twelve Peer Learning Groups of pastors each year. The groups discussed the challenges of preaching in the twenty-first century and explored best practices to meet those challenges. The learning harvested from these groups has many implications for seminary pedagogy. The new grant program will build on that learning and seek to incorporate it into the life of the seminary and in faculty engagement with alumni.

Calvin Theological Seminary also received a sustainability match grant (2017-2019) from the Lilly Endowment for \$125,000 in order to build on several of the goals from our 2013-2016 grant of \$250,000 under the Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers initiative.

The sustainability proposal builds on three of the four components in the original grant:

- research that more fully documents our reality of student debt and its contributing factors
- the importance of financial literacy to better equip future ministers
- greater financial assistance for our students

The two themes of the sustainability grant narrative are (1) stewarding the ecosystem health of Calvin Theological Seminary and (2) a “wellness plan”: more students, more funding, less debt.

We were also pleased to encourage the work of the CRCNA as they were invited to submit a grant proposal under the National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. We had several meetings with their grant developers, offering input from our work, and we were pleased to write a letter of support for their grant submission to Lilly Endowment Inc. titled “The CRCNA Financial Shalom Project.” We were even more pleased that they were awarded the requested grant. We look forward to possibilities of collaboration in pursuing financial shalom in our respective places of ministry.

On September 8, 2015, Calvin College (now 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. Twenty new students from within the prison system came together to begin a five-year bachelor's degree program accredited through Calvin University. A total of 94 students are now enrolled in the program. This program began in response to a request from the State of Michigan and is a coordinated effort of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. It is our hope that this “seminary behind bars program” will be used by God to transform not only the students in the classroom but also the prison system as these students are deployed within it. In addition, we testify that professors and students at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary are changed and affected by their involvement in the lives of students

at Handlon. Lord willing, the first graduates of the B.A. program will receive their diplomas on May 11, 2020.

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Eleven of our 19 formation group leaders are pastors, and the other eight are seminary faculty / administration members. They include Mike Abma, Amanda Benckhuysen, Sarah Chun, Darrell Delaney, Chris DeMan, Aaron Einfeld, Lynn Barger Elliott, Doug Fauble, Marc Holland, Chris Klein, David Poolman, Denise Posie, David Rylaarsdam, Jeff Sajdak, Chris Schoon, Heather Strooboscher, Albert Strydhorst, Corey Van Huizen, and Cory Willson.

We are also grateful to pastors and others for recommending great students for the Dig program (formerly Facing Your Future). We celebrate the continuation of this opportunity to train young people and expose them to ministry. During the summer of 2019, 16 high school students experienced theological education at the seminary, followed by a week of ministry in the Chicago area. Churches and individuals can learn more about this vital ministry at dig.calvinseminary.edu/. A remodel of this program will occur in the summer of 2020 with the use of the metro Detroit / Windsor area being "home-base" for this ministry and calling exploration.

VIII. Students 2019-2020

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics from Fall 2019 indicate the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

A. Denominational affiliation

Christian Reformed: 101 (42%)

Non-Christian Reformed students: 141 (58%)

Presbyterian: 56

RCA: 17

Other Reformed: 17

Baptist: 6

Other / None listed: 45

Total denominations represented: more than 27

B. Geographical information

U.S. students: 130 (54%)

Canadian students: 27 (11%)

International students, other than Canadian: 85 (35%)

Korean: 53 (22%)

Chinese: 16 (7%)

Other: 16 (7%)

Total countries represented: 26

C. Student body

Male students: 181 (75%)

Female students: 61 (25%)

D. Programs and students enrolled

M.Div.: 120

Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy: 16

M.A. (English): 26

M.A. (Spanish): 6

M.T.S.: 19

Th.M.: 42

Ph.D.: 29

Hybrid/Distance Learning: 65 (this number does not reflect residential students who also take a hybrid/distance class)

Certificate/diploma: 5

Unclassified: 9

E. Nondegree students

We have 94 students who are part of the joint Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary program known as the Calvin Prison Initiative. We also have a total of 24 students registered in our two Spanish-language certificate programs.

IX. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Curt Walters, chair, and Julius Medenblik, president, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod, by way of the ballot, ratify the election and reappointment of trustees from the slates of nominees presented.

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.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Heather Garretson, secretary

Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this supplement of additional matters relating to the seminary.

I. Board of Trustees

At its meeting on May 21-22, 2020, the board elected the following officers for 2020-2021: Keith Oosthoek, chair; Dave Morren, vice chair; Heather Garretson, secretary.

II. Academics

A. Graduates and new programs

COVID-19 has obviously affected our global village as well as our ongoing formation and education programs at Calvin Theological Seminary. We are grateful for the investment made many years ago in an online delivery system of education, by means of which we moved all of our classes online from mid-March through the end of this academic year.

Calvin Theological Seminary graduated 61 students, collectively celebrated by means of a 2020 Commencement Congratulations Video released

on our originally scheduled commencement date of May 23, 2020 (see vimeo.com/421778354).

The international reach and scope of the ministry of Calvin Theological Seminary was again illustrated by graduates from the following locales: Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, South Korea, and the United States.

Calvin Seminary is beginning a new, completely online certificate program in cooperation with Christian Schools International (CSI). We are now offering a Certificate in Bible Instruction, a 15 credit-hour program with required courses in “Integrating Faith and Teaching” and “Teaching Bible,” along with 11 hours of other seminary courses. All of these credits will count toward a master’s degree in ministry leadership or a master of divinity degree at CTS. In addition, we have an agreement with the Calvin University Education Program that all of these credits will count toward a master of education degree at Calvin University. We see this certificate as a service to Christian schools binationally and as a gateway to encourage students to consider further CTS Education (see calvinseminary.edu/academics/certificate-in-bible-instruction).

Calvin Seminary has been approved by the Association of Theological Schools to begin offering a doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree with an anticipated start date in the late summer of 2020. A previous synod asked CTS to investigate this degree program as part of a continuing education report—and we are glad for the ongoing support of the church. We aim to begin with a cohort of twelve students from diverse backgrounds (see calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry).

B. Distinguished Alumni Awards

Rev. John DeVries (founder of Bibles for India, now known as Mission India) and Rev. Stanley Jim (regional director for CRC Home Missions from 2000-2016 and longtime pastor in Classis Red Mesa) received the seminary’s Distinguished Alumni Award for 2020.

C. Board actions

At its two most recent meetings, the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees took the following actions or took note of the following items for information:

1. Reappointed Cory Willson for two years (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2022) as Jake and Betsy Tuls associate professor of missiology and missional ministry.
2. Received notice from Mariano Avila of his intention to retire on January 31, 2023, which (D.V.) would complete 20 years as a professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary.
3. Affirmed the placement of Jeffrey A. D. Weima as holder of the Deppe family doctoral chair in New Testament as part of the expansion of the Calvin Theological Seminary Ph.D. program into New Testament studies.
4. Noted the intention to hold, at a future date, the first bachelor of arts commencement ceremony for students completing this degree through the Calvin Prison Initiative. This program is part of an ongoing partnership with Calvin University.

5. Noted that the Meeter Center of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary is planning a two-day conference for September 18-19, 2020, to commemorate the Puritans.
6. Noted that the upcoming Loving Your Neighbor Conference: “Forming Citizens of God’s Kingdom in Prison and Upon Re-entry” will be fully online and held July 6-7, 2020. More information can be found at calvinseminary.edu/academics/loving-your-neighbor-2020.
7. Heard an update of “Ministry in a COVID-Shaped World.” These are fully online courses, with some classes presented entirely in Spanish. More information on this joint venture of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary can be found at calvinseminary.edu/academics/covid-19-courses.
8. Heard an update from Rev. Shawn Brix, who on January 2, 2020, began work as the Calvin Theological Seminary Canadian church relations liaison.
9. In keeping with the actions of Synod 2019 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (or the Council of Delegates in the interim), identified two additional at-large trustees for the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Heather Garretson, secretary

Worship Ministries

I. Introduction

Worship Ministries is grateful to be celebrating its fifth year as a “servant of servants.” Our desire is that every worshipping community in the Christian Reformed Church in North America experiences Spirit-filled gospel proclamation and worship that is directed to God, is biblically based and theologically Reformed, and is characterized by creativity, discernment, spiritual vitality, the faith formation of all worshipers, and a call to serve others.

At the writing of this report our 2.3 FTE staff includes Joyce Berger (director), Laura Meyering (administrative specialist), and Diane Dykgraaf (program coordinator). Our regional-advisory committee is made up of Gary Bomhof (Region 1), Elly Boersma (Region 2), Joyce Jackson (Region 3), Darlene Silversmith (Region 6), April Jackson (African-American representative), Christian Sebastia (Latino Consejo representative), and Benjamin Hoekman (Calvin Theological Seminary student representative). We are currently hoping to fill several vacancies.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

We continue to work closely with Faith Formation Ministries and are collaborating on a project aimed at laying out a Reformed approach to the place of children in the worshipping community. Through this project we hope to help set a foundation for further resourcing in this area.

This past year we offered two webinars on the topic of mentoring (recordings are available on The Network at network.crcna.org). *Reformed Worship* (RW) continues to provide resources for children, such as “Five Tips for Using Puppets in Children’s Worship” (Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence, RW 134); resources for teens, “On Engaging Quieter Young People in Worship Ministry” (John D. Witvliet, RW 131); and an entire theme issue related to older adults and worship, including resources for “Planning Funerals with Seniors” (Robert Koornneef, RW 132), and other intergenerational resources.

B. Servant leadership

The gathering of the congregation happens most frequently around worship, so worship serves as the locus for much of a congregation’s expression of celebration, lament, and everything in between. This reality is why Worship Ministries is helping to create and identify worship resources for a toolkit that Pastor Church Resources and Resonate Global Mission are developing for Legacy churches.

C. Global mission

All Christians are called to be missional wherever God has placed them, and that is why the *Reformed Worship* journal continues to address the connection between worship and the rest of our life—for example, by including an article by the new director of Faith Formation, Chris Schoon: “Pitfalls and Guardrails: Considering Worship and Mission” (RW 132, Mar. 2019).

Reformed Worship, with its global audience and subscription base, has been a great platform for learning from people around the world, such as Dr. Isabella Wong, music editor at the Chinese Literature Council, who shared

resources from the Asian Church in *RW* 134. It is also a place where we can learn from each other about multicultural worship: “Call It Worship: A Conversation about Cultural Diversity and Worship” (Angie Hong, Adam Perez; *RW* 133).

Desiring to be a support for worship leaders of churches of all types across our denomination, we have also welcomed the opportunity to be part of the church-planting cross-functional team led by Resonate staff and to have added a church planter to our regional-advisory team.

D. Mercy and justice

In worship we are reminded of how God wants us to relate to other humans and creation itself. This year saw the conclusion of our collaborative work with the Climate Witness Project, including the opportunity for staff to write on the connection between Easter and Creation Care for the *Do Justice* blog. *Reformed Worship* published an address by Rebecca Warren written for the conference “For Such a Time as This! Worship Meets Justice and the Arts in a Turbulent Time”; the event was a collaborative effort of several CRC ministries and took place at First CRC in Toronto in 2017. *RW*’s theme issue last June on aging adults was also a result of a prior collaboration between CRC ministries—a conference led by Worship Ministries and Disability Concerns the previous year. In addition, aiming to address current issues such as the alarming suicide rate among Indigenous youth, we featured “Praying with Indigenous People: A Prayer for the Suicide Crisis” by Shannon Perez, Canadian Ministries’ justice and reconciliation mobilizer, and Danielle Steenwyk-Rowaan, who served in communications for the CRC’s justice-related ministries in Canada.

E. Global proclamation and worship

1. Reformed Worship

One of the key ways we resource and support the worship of our churches is through the publication of *Reformed Worship*. The CRCNA has printed quarterly issues of this journal since 1986, and features have been available digitally since 2016. Not only has it continued as a relied-upon resource for the CRC, but *RW* also continues to support the worshipping community around the world. In fact, for the first time ever, the number of web visitors from the United Kingdom is larger than those from Canada, with significant other traffic coming from the Philippines, Australia, Nigeria, India, Singapore, South Africa, and Ghana. This past year the *RW* site received a total of 508,006 web visitors and 908,032 pageviews. *RW*’s monthly e-newsletter is sent to 6,736 people and has 5,460 Facebook followers, including a new subgroup for choir directors. Currently *RW* has 1,870 subscribers, of which 307 are CRC churches in the U.S. and 204 are CRC churches in Canada.

2. Peer learning groups

Each year Worship Ministries offers individuals the opportunity to participate in peer learning groups that meet to read one of three books we have chosen. This past year we also formed two online groups, for a total of 10 groups and 58 participants.

3. Webinars

In 2019, Worship Ministries offered eight webinars, viewed live by 96 individuals. Topics included communion, mentoring, choosing music, planning for Advent, and general worship theology. These webinars make up just a part of our current library of 22 worship-related webinars available 24/7 on the CRCNA Network (network.crcna.org). We also started a YouTube channel this past year (search “worship ministries crcna” on YouTube.com). Between the two libraries on these sites, the 22 webinars had 1,371 viewers.

4. Endorsed coaches

We continue to work on developing the endorsed coaches program for Worship Ministries and have made a few changes in order to make it more accessible to our churches. Fourteen individuals have applied and are now endorsed by Worship Ministries; their gifts and worship-related experience will be a blessing to the CRCNA. For more information on this program and the endorsed coaches, check out crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches.

5. Denominational support

Worship Ministries continues to support the denomination in additional ways, such as coordinating the worship at synod and serving as the convener of the Bible Translations Committee.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

A. *The local church*

Worship Ministries works to network with, learn from, and support specific needs of the local church.

This past year we helped a church desiring to celebrate weekly communion by arranging for an online conversation between their worship committee and an endorsed worship coach as well as a Saturday workshop for their congregation led by Rev. Len Vander Zee and worship leader Philip Majorins.

We also helped to plan two events that were requested by local worship leaders, who also participated in the event planning and leading. “Telling God’s Story: A Day of Learning and Inspiration for Worshipers, Leaders, Musicians, and Preachers” took place in Hamilton, Ontario, with 83 attendees and was cosponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. “The Church Sound Bootcamp,” held at South Christian High School in Byron Center, Michigan, was well received by 157 attendees.

We continue to work with Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, to enable a cohort of CRC worship leaders to participate in Samford’s Certificate of Worship Leadership program. This one-year, four-course, fully online certificate is available at a reduced rate only through Worship Ministries, with additional funding available if necessary. Eleven CRC worship leaders received their Samford certificates in 2019, and twelve others are in the 2020 cohort.

In response to a request by Sonlight CRC, Regina, Saskatchewan, for the written sermons related to a five-week series on baptism published in *Reformed Worship*, we chose to test the idea of prerecording sermons that are prepared for a specific context without using any professional equipment or setting. These were produced in relationship with the church keeping

in mind not only their general context but also the specifics of the service itself. A good use of technology while still being incarnational, this experiment turned out to be a success, and we look forward to seeing how this model might be used within the CRC.

While planning to hold our fall regional-advisory committee meeting at a church in Classis Red Mesa, the idea came up that we should spend a majority of our time listening and learning from the churches there. So our meeting group expanded to include an endorsed coach, the director of Faith Formation Ministries, a regional catalyzer, a member of the COD, and the director of ministries and administration. In our three days together we were able to spend time with members from nine churches—physically visiting six of those congregations. We learned a lot and are eager to continue developing relationships with Red Mesa churches and individuals.

Staff also worked to create a welcome packet for new worship leaders, attended the Canadian National Gathering, Inspire 2019, and preached on World Wide Communion Sunday at Fourteenth St. CRC in Holland, Michigan.

Through email, phone calls, and personal visits we have connected with 278 individuals from 211 various CRC congregations (not including RW). Our monthly Worship Ministries' e-newsletter is sent to 2,223 people, and our Facebook page has 466 members.

B. Other partners

Worship Ministries is blessed to continue to partner with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW), which, in addition to supporting a number of projects financially, supplies us with insightful conversational partners and provides us opportunities to continue to grow and wrestle with larger questions that affect the CRC. In the past year staff have had the opportunities to participate in cultural intelligence training with an eye toward its application in worship and to be part of a consultation on multicultural worship. CICW also supports *Reformed Worship* through the one-day-a-week loan of Kai Ton Chau to serve as its associate editor.

Having deepened our connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada by collaborating on a conference in Ontario, we are looking forward to additional opportunities with that denomination as well.

Worship Ministries
Joyce Borger, director

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Dordt University

Greetings to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. We are grateful to God for the partnership of our mutually beneficial ministries.

This year, when students arrived on Dordt University's campus, they were greeted by two newly completed building projects. These projects offered larger, updated spaces for two departments: theatre arts and nursing. Dordt has taken its nursing program fully in-house after a long partnership with a local hospital-based college of nursing. With this change has come the Carl and Gloria Zylstra Nursing Education Center, which offers a skills lab, two simulation labs with manikins, observation rooms, offices, and storage. An additional classroom and theatre-style viewing room have also been added.

Not only has Dordt experienced growth with physical spaces, but graduate programs are also expanding. In the past two years our master of education program has increased enrollment by 70 percent and offers eight specialized tracks. In fall 2020 we will also begin offering a master of social work degree and a master of public administration degree. All three of these programs are offered 100 percent online and are integrally taught from a Christian worldview. These classes are designed to be engaging and relevant for working professionals.

Dordt is excited that for the fourth year in a row we have been named the number-one university in the nation for student engagement, according to *The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education* 2020 rankings. This category examines whether students are engaged in critical thinking and learning, how the classes challenge students, how the students perceive professors' active mentoring, and to what extent the teaching applies student learning to the real world. In addition, Dordt has tied for third place in the Midwest Colleges list by *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings.

Dordt's Pro-Tech program is now in its third year, offering hands-on, two-year associate degrees in manufacturing technology as well as farm operations and management. Pro-Tech plays to our region's strengths as a manufacturing and agriculture hub and emphasizes the nobility of all forms of work from a kingdom worldview. We have been blessed with numerous community partnerships that have benefited the program through internships, equipment donations, and strategic partnerships.

Dordt's mission to equip students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life continues to be the foundation of everything we do. We are grateful for the second highest enrollment in our history this past year, with 1,548 students, and we love to hear stories of how alumni continue to experience spiritual growth following their time at Dordt. According to a recent alumni survey, 96 percent of Dordt alumni report attending church weekly. When students are on campus, we strive to help them experience what living in Christian community can be like, so that when they leave Dordt as alumni they continue to pursue those relationships.

We ask that you continue to pray for us as we seek to be faithful to the task of training up kingdom citizens. Dordt remains committed to Christian

education, and we pray that all of our educational work is continually permeated with the spirit and teaching of Christianity.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Dordt University
Erik Hoekstra, president

Institute for Christian Studies

The 2019-20 academic year marks the Institute for Christian Studies' (ICS) second year of operating in its new home at 59 St. George Street, in the Knox College building at the heart of the University of Toronto campus. On November 30, 2019, we welcomed over 175 friends and supporters to our second annual Open House and Advent Concert, *Creator of the Stars of Night*, in the Knox College chapel. The ICS community continues to experience the setting at Knox College as a great blessing to its collective educational work. One added benefit of moving to this location is that, for the first time, ICS students can live in a Knox residence hall and purchase a University of Toronto meal plan. This year, two first-year students took advantage of this economical accommodation opportunity, a blessing in a city that is experiencing an affordable-housing crisis.

As we continue to seek effective and innovative ways to serve God faithfully in the arena of Christian graduate education, we have experienced God's blessing on our work and in the lives of our students. The ongoing, generous commitment of our CRC churches and support community has encouraged us in this educational mission, enabling us to form cultural leaders in a learning environment that expects and encourages the integration of faith and learning and nurtures the ability to join God's work of blessing and healing in all areas of contemporary life.

Following are some highlights of the ongoing work of ICS in 2019-20:

Our M.A. and Ph.D. degree programs are central to our commitment to Christian scholarship at the highest levels. At the same time ICS also provides significant educational opportunities to lifelong learners through our master of worldview studies and continuing education programs. In fall 2018, ICS also launched a unique "Educational Leadership" stream in the M.A. program (the MA-EL), designed in partnership with the Christian Teacher Academy in Hamilton, Ontario, to meet the professional development needs of curricular innovators and principals of K-12 Christian schools. In fall 2019 a small cohort of four students joined two students from the 2018 pioneer cohort. We hope to grow this program incrementally and organically, and to that end this year we also advertised to fill the position of professor in the philosophy of education and the practice of pedagogy. Should we be blessed with a successful search, the MA-EL program will have a faculty director dedicated to its establishment and continued growth.

At our Annual Convocation in May 2019, we celebrated the graduation of three junior members (students): 1 Ph.D., 1 M.A., and 1 M.W.S. In 2020 we anticipate celebrating the graduation of four junior members: 2 Ph.D. and 2 M.A. One of those Ph.D. graduates, Joshua Harris, successfully defended his Ph.D. on September 16, 2019, at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam (our partners in a conjoint Ph.D. program) with a dissertation titled *Neither Solitary nor Diverse: Transcendental Multitude in Thomas Aquinas*. Joshua joined the faculty of the King's University as a full-time assistant professor of philosophy in fall 2018.

At the time of writing this report (February 2020), total course enrollments for the current academic year are 117. In terms of full-time equivalency (FTE), this number translates to 20 full-time students. After adding full-time students who are in post-coursework stages of their programs, the final FTE

number this year is 34, similar to that of last year. This number does not yet include enrollment figures for the May intensive seminar to be offered jointly with The King's University (see below), as well as the summer 2020 Art in Orvieto seminar scheduled to take place July 16 through August 6, 2020. So far, 80 individuals have taken at least one course at ICS this year.

On May 23-31, 2019, ICS took a historic step in partnering with The King's University to offer a joint intensive seminar in Toronto, the first course approved for credit by both institutions. Titled "To the Unknown God: Paul and Some Philosophers," the course was co-taught by Ronald Kuipers of ICS and Jeffrey Dudiak of The King's University. In total, 11 students took the course: 5 King's students, 2 King's graduates (one of whom joined ICS's M.A. program in the fall), 1 Trinity Western graduate student, and 3 ICS students. The course was also attached to ICS's third Annual Undergraduate Workshop on the theme of political theology, titled "God and Politics: Religion and Public Life in the 21st Century." Ten undergraduates from across North America and beyond gathered May 23-25 to share their research with the ICS academic community at this event.

In this academic year (May 28-June 5, 2020), ICS and King's are again offering a joint intensive seminar led by Dr. Kuipers and Dr. Dudiak, this time focusing on the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt. The course is also again attached to our (fourth) Annual Undergraduate Workshop, on the Arendt-inspired theme "Evil, Resistance, and Judgment: Creating a World Fit for Human Habitation."

Beyond this particular teaching collaboration, our partnership dialogue with King's continues to bear more fruit. In addition to the annual joint seminar in Toronto, this year four ICS students are taking King's professor Neal De Roo's philosophy seminar, "Foundations and Implications of Phenomenology," via video conference. Finally, ICS associate professor of worldview studies and academic dean Gideon Straus was invited to be the keynote speaker at King's Interdisciplinary Studies Conference, "For Love or Money? Vocational Wayfinding," held in Edmonton, Alberta, from January 22-23, 2020.

In addition to their teaching and graduate supervision duties, our senior members (faculty) continue to make significant contributions to academic research by giving popular and academic presentations, and by publishing articles in popular and academic journals. This year ICS's five faculty members made 11 presentations at academic conferences and 40 presentations at popular events, and they published two articles in academic journals. ICS's junior members have been productive as well, with 15 presentations at academic conferences, six publications in academic journals, 12 popular presentations, and nine popular publications.

ICS's Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics (CPRSE) continues to collaborate with other academic and community organizations to pursue quality research and to curate public dialogue about leading questions of life and society. This year's highlights of CPRSE activity include the following:

- Interfaith Dialogue—CPRSE partnered with the Canadian Interfaith Conversation (CIC), Canada's largest interfaith dialogue and cooperation network, to plan and convene the biennial *Our Whole Society* confer-

ence. From April 28-30, 2019, CPRSE participated in the CIC's fourth OWS conference, taking place at the University of Toronto on the theme "Identity and Common Ground in an Age of Transition." CPRSE director Ron Kuipers also serves on the steering committee for the fifth OWS conference, *Free to Believe, Responsible to Act*, slated for May 3-4, 2021, at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

- Collaboration with Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)—On October 3, 2019, CPRSE partnered with CPJ to host a town hall gathering in Toronto ahead of the 2019 Canadian Federal Election on the theme of "Shaping a Just Canada."
- *Scripture, Faith, and Scholarship* seminar series—CPRSE hosted two public *Scripture, Faith, and Scholarship* seminars this year. The first, held on December 3, 2019, was led by ICS students in the new Educational Leadership stream of our M.A. program, as a culminating presentation for their MA-EL course "Deeper Learning." The second seminar, held January 23, 2020, featured Matthew Kaemingk, associate dean and assistant professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, speaking about "Hospitality, Scripture, and Interreligious Dialogue."
- Fourth Annual Undergraduate Workshop (May 23-25)—As mentioned above, this year's ICS Undergraduate Workshop is titled "Evil, Resistance, and Judgment: Creating a World Fit for Human Habitation." This event provides an annual opportunity for undergraduate students to showcase their academic work in a collaborative and constructive environment, receiving feedback from ICS junior and senior members, and it leads those students registered into the intensive portion of the joint King's University/ICS seminar on the philosophy of Hannah Arendt.
- *Critical Faith* podcast—Featuring the voices of ICS faculty, students, and special guests, this podcast provides greater public access to the intellectual conversations taking place at ICS. This year the podcast focuses on the ICS/King's course theme "Evil, Resistance, and Judgment," as well as key issues and figures in the Reformational philosophical tradition. At the time of writing this report, we have posted 13 episodes, with an average of 110 downloads per episode, and a total reach of 2,300 (an increase of 28 percent over the previous year). Our most popular episode was an interview with pastor Thyra Van Keeken of First CRC of Toronto.

This academic year has been both dynamic and fruitful. We ask you to pray that God continues to bless our work and that it may effectively serve the purposes God has for ICS in today's world. The strong support we receive from the Christian Reformed Church in North America is a great encouragement to us as we pursue the academic mission to which God has called ICS. We wish to thank the church especially for the commitment this support demonstrates to our faculty, students, and the wider Christian community we seek to serve.

May God grant you wisdom and discernment in your work during Synod 2020.

Institute for Christian Studies
Ronald A. Kuipers, president

The King's University

It has been another year of increasing student enrollment. In fall 2019 we set a record high again, with 850 students enrolled. We are incredibly thankful for continued growth in our student population, and we continue striving to reach our goal of enrolling over 1,000 students. As student enrollment is directly linked to the vibrancy and viability of our institution, we covet your prayers and continued support in encouraging prospective students in your community to pursue their Christian university education at King's.

In 2019-20, The King's University is proud to be celebrating 40 years. Established in 1979, King's was founded in the belief that Christian universities matter—to students, to communities, to our world. This year, King's observes 40 years of developing minds and equipping learners to bring change, and we celebrate a proud tradition of rigorous academic scholarship and research at the highest levels. Most importantly, we celebrate the generations of alumni and graduates who form King's emerging legacy as a university, unrelenting in its pursuit of student success, faithful scholarship, and commitment to equipping learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ.

In conjunction with our 40th anniversary, we launched Alumni Achievement Awards at King's. King's has countless alumni around the world accomplishing amazing things each and every day. These alumni are a wonderful testament to the return on your investment into the university over the past 40 years, and we were honored to celebrate three alumni at our 40th Anniversary Banquet this past fall. Christa Aubrey (B.Sc., 2008) was named our Accomplished Young Alumni for her work in the field of medicine. In addition to becoming a medical doctor and currently serving as a clinical fellow in gynecological oncology at the age of 32, Christa is a mother to two children and an active researcher, and she has attained a master of science degree in public health. Jesse Edgington (B.Sc., 2000) was the deserving recipient of the first Servant Leader Award, recognizing his work with the Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference, his passion for creation care, climate justice, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and his engagement with his church and neighborhood. Jesse is also currently pursuing a Micah Certificate at the King's Micah Centre. Robert Greidanus (1989) was our inaugural Distinguished Alumni Award recipient. Robert is a family physician and surgeon in Peace River, Alberta, where he serves the local rural community and surrounding First Nations communities. Robert has not only committed his life to serving the underserved and underprivileged in Canada, he has made this commitment globally. Robert and his family spent seven years in Africa, where he served as a medical missionary. Robert has demonstrated remarkable service to others and is committed to building a more humane, just, and sustainable world. We are thankful for all King's alumni who are living out our mission in their communities. If you would like to nominate someone for the 2020 Alumni Achievement Awards, complete the nomination form at kingsu.ca/alumni/alumni-achievement-awards.

Recent shifts in the provincial government and a continually depressed economy in Alberta have resulted in some significant alterations in the post-secondary government funding model. We are thankful to have been spared funding cuts mid-fiscal year in the past fall, but we are currently

preparing for a decrease in our provincial operating grant this spring. This presents a significant challenge for King's and other independent institutions in the province, since we are already working with significantly less government funding to begin with. The government's desire is to have all post-secondary institutions receive between 28-35 percent of their total revenue from tuition. This has been part of the impetus behind their cuts to funding. Last year King's derived 47 percent of its revenue from tuition and fees. There is significant concern that funding cuts will put further strain on students who desire a Christian university experience. Please pray for wisdom for our elected officials, that their decisions will be made in a way that preserve the diversity of choice within the post-secondary sector in Alberta. Financial support from our community is as important today as it was 40 years ago, when the institution was in its infancy. Please continue to support King's and our students to ensure that Reformed Christian university education continues to be available and accessible for generations to come.

King's continues to be committed to being a faith-filled, Christian university with staff and faculty who live out their deeply rooted Christianity in their work at the university. Our Statement of Faith, rooted in Scripture, informs our mission "to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King." This core biblical stance drives how King's, as a Christian university, engages with our students, our community, and with the society around us. Thank you to the Christian Reformed Church for your faithful partnership in prayer and generous financial support.

The King's University
Melanie Humphreys, president

Kuyper College

It's been another good year at Kuyper College. The stories of our students and alumni show that we are fulfilling our goal of education as we enable them to flourish through the good work of our faculty and staff, the generosity of our donors, and God's faithful provision.

Our newly revised philosophy of education states that we do not want our students' primary desire to be for good grades, achievement, or mere accumulation of knowledge. That's not enough. At Kuyper, our end goal of education for our students is that they "live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world."

In fall 2019 we dedicated our students toward this goal—which fits our mission—"to equip students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ's church and his world."

On a trip to central Minnesota this past year, Kuyper's president had lunch with a group of church and civic leaders, many of whom are Kuyper College alumni. In opening devotions, one leader shared his story of being called into ministry. His calling started when he was a young teen and said "Yes" to Jesus Christ at a church event, and it solidified when he said "No" to receiving a full scholarship to a prestigious college. He explained that his decision wasn't easy and seemed foolish to many people, but he knew that God was leading him on a different path—toward full-time Christian ministry—and that path led him to study at Kuyper College. He went on to share that in retrospect he has no regrets, for he has witnessed God's faithfulness and leading in ways beyond what he could have asked or imagined. He closed by saying that he loves what he is doing for Jesus!

This is a refrain that is echoed by Kuyper alumni who are living faithfully for Jesus Christ in more than fifty countries in God's good world. Many of them are connected to a variety of CRCNA churches and organizations, serving as ordained pastors, missionaries, youth workers, theological educators, entrepreneurs, leaders of nonprofit organizations, social workers, teachers, writers, community developers, and much more. And they love what they are doing for Jesus!

Again this past year the Kuyper College community has drawn together to prepare students to be the next generation of Christian leaders—leaders who will live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world, just as our alumni are doing. The world needs such Christian leaders. With an increased awareness of the changing needs and expectations in higher education and the workplace, we are committed to providing our undergraduate and graduate students with quality, affordable programs and well-fitted student services within an innovative and applied learning environment.

Focusing on our undergraduate students . . .

- Our first-year Kuyper Seminar and our Vocation and Calling Formation program enable our undergraduate students to discern their calling and evaluate their spiritual development through intentional touch points with faculty, staff, and mentors during their college experience.
- Our fully implemented KuyperWorks program connects work and academics in meaningful ways to provide more than 65 undergraduate

students with professional, workplace-ready skills and more affordable education.

- Our Loan Repayment Assistance Program provides a safety net to help students repay their college loans after graduation, for we recognize that the majority of our alumni serve in career positions that have limited wages and salaries.
- Our enhanced professional counseling services enable our students to receive free counseling sessions from caring and capable Christian mental health providers who understand the challenges college-age students are facing today.
- Our internships and capstone courses provide all of our undergraduate students with opportunities to tangibly connect their classroom learning with real-world learning so that they can be fully equipped in their various vocations.
- Our robust foundation of Bible and theology courses remain the mainstay of our undergraduate curriculum and a key reason why students come to Kuyper. They love God’s Word, and they desire to engage in purposeful study and practical application.

Focusing on our graduate students and others . . .

- Our Master of Ministry program successfully launched this past year, and it involves several students from the CRCNA. This is a hybrid, praxis-based program of eight-week courses, aimed at equipping women and men who are already serving in some ministry capacity. Courses include topics such as contemporary theological issues, financial management in ministry, technology and transformation, teaching and preaching the Old Testament, and discipleship and spiritual formation. These courses are also available as professional development opportunities for people who already hold a master’s degree.
- Our aim is to equip more and more professional and lay leaders within the church. That is why this winter we piloted a new program called KuyperEquips, providing courses to leaders and members of partner churches in order to equip them to lead others. In this pilot program, we partnered with six area Christian Reformed churches as well as a Reformed Church in America congregation and two parachurch organizations. Participants attended several of our Bible and theology courses at the undergraduate and master levels. These courses provided not only avenues of personal enrichment for the participants but also opportunities to enhance our on-campus community as other students engaged with these participants from area churches and organizations.

By God’s grace, we have achieved these initiatives through the dedication and skill of our faculty and staff and the support of women and men within the CRCNA who generously pray, work, and give to help us further our mission. We are thankful for our partnership with the CRCNA, and we look forward to finding more tangible ways to serve Christ’s church and his world together as we live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God’s good world.

Kuyper College
Patricia R. Harris, president

Redeemer University

Greetings from Redeemer University! It's official! After a successful organization review and a name-change application process with external expert review panels under the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, Minister for Colleges and Universities Ross Romano granted ministerial consent on January 20, 2020, for Redeemer to be known as Redeemer University.

This is an exciting and historic change for Redeemer. We believe that changing the institution's name to Redeemer University will clear up confusion that regularly arises from the term "university college." Aligning the name with the university education that Redeemer provides clarifies the degree-granting status that we have had for over two decades.

More exciting changes are coming in the long-awaited filling of the provost and vice president, academic position. We are pleased to welcome David Zietsma as Redeemer's new provost and vice president, academic, beginning April 1. Formerly the vice president, external relations and enrollment, Dr. Zietsma brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from the pivotal role he has been serving for five years in addition to his time as dean of humanities (2010-15) and as a tenure-track member of the history department when he first joined in 2007.

Along with many changes in 2019, Redeemer is pleased to see the newly created gap-year program, Act Five, flourishing with its first cohort. As the young people in this group live and learn together, they have been busy with the many programs and activities that Act Five offers. Students spent a week on the Six Nations reserve, learning from community members in partnership with Ohsweken Baptist Church. They also traveled to Zambia with Edudeo, serving in local villages and communities. You can follow along with their experiences through Instagram at @act_five.

In fall 2019, Redeemer partnered with the CRCNA's Faith Formation Ministries at Redeemer's fall conference featuring Tish Warren Harrison and Jen Pollock Michelle. More recently, in January 2020, Resonate Global Mission's Greg Sinclair hosted a discussion panel at The World and Our Calling lecture series with Matthew Kaemingk on "Learning to Love our Muslim Neighbours." We appreciate opportunities like these to partner together to feature influential Christian public thinkers, serving to encourage Redeemer faculty, students, and community members to encounter new ways to think about their faith, their culture, and God's world.

As the Re Campaign came to a close at the end of 2019, Redeemer can see the blessings of God's provision. Through generous donors, the Re Campaign raised \$19.3 million to fund the Strategic 2020 Plan, which launched a variety of exciting additions and improvements across campus. These include the Centre for Experiential Learning and Careers that continues to prepare students for employment after graduation with a variety of co-op programs and internships across many fields of study. They also include our new Media and Communications Studies and Urban and Intercultural Ministry programs, which offer new opportunities for students to pursue their careers and callings.

Improvements made at Redeemer could not happen without a supportive community. During the first week of February, students, faculty, and staff

took the opportunity to celebrate generous donors through the Gratitude Project—a week-long reflection and series of events highlighting contributions that have been made so that students can better afford a university education. Redeemer is deeply grateful for the financial contributions and support in prayer from the Christian Reformed Church. More young people than ever are being educated through a Reformed Christian worldview, and your support is essential in continuing this mission. Thank you!

Your partnership has been vital as Redeemer looks forward in 2020 to a promising future with increased enrollment, a new strategic plan, and a renewed commitment to prepare students to follow Christ wherever they are called.

Redeemer University
Robert J. Graham, president

Trinity Christian College

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update to synod on behalf of Trinity Christian College. Throughout our history, we have valued our relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. We are grateful for the support from CRC congregations to advance our mission of providing a distinctive Christian higher education experience at Trinity. We cherish the students from CRC families who select Trinity as their college. We relish the opportunities to be in partnership with the CRC in a variety of ways—from hosting classis and denominational meetings, to serving as a resource for local congregations, to preparing students to be leaders in the church. Our partnership with the CRC is a valuable and, we believe, a mutually beneficial one!

Trinity marked 60 years of existence on October 1, 2019. On the first day of October 1959, in the former Navajo Hills Golf Course clubhouse, in what then was called the Fireside Chapel, Trinity officially opened with 35 students and four full-time faculty. The building had been hastily prepared for academic purposes as the golf course had only recently vacated it—even the bar remained intact on that first day of class (minus its contents, of course). As is fitting for a Christian institution, the first official act of the new college was an opening convocation with a sermon from the chair of the board of trustees, Arthur DeKruyter. Thereafter, it was time for class, and Derke Bergsma taught the first class at Trinity—Latin 101. Trinity was off and running, and we have been looking forward ever since.

One of our founders, Richard Prince, in a column for the *Illinois Observer*, succinctly summarized what those faithful founders were up to more than half a century ago:

We stand today before a golden opportunity to plan for tomorrow. This type of building for tomorrow always demands Courage, Faith & Vision. Remember, Trinity stands for the extension of God's kingdom. Nothing can be more important than that.

It was an auspicious start, and over the decades God has blessed it. From beginning as a two-year school to become a four-year school offering a variety of degrees. From being unaccredited to having full accreditation. From limited academic offerings in a few core disciplines to professional preparation in fields like business, education, and nursing. From being exclusively undergraduate to expanding into adult programs and then graduate programs too. From having a nearly homogenous population of Chicagoland Dutch Reformed families to embracing a diverse community made up of varied ethnicities, denominational ties, and geographies.

God has indeed blessed Trinity at her young age. And Trinity is *young*, as far as academic institutions go. (By way of contrast, America's oldest college, Harvard University, celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1696—a full 80 years before the founding of the United States.) So, at Trinity's Diamond Jubilee, we rightly have paused, looked back, given thanks, and celebrated for all that Trinity has accomplished and all whom Trinity has shaped and molded in a few short decades.

And what an impact Trinity continues to have! Consider these examples of external indicators of recognized excellence:

- Nursing program ranked number 2 in the state of Illinois (with 100% passage rates in four of the past five years on national licensure exams)
- Education program ranked in the top 20 nationally
- Top CPA passage rates among Illinois universities
- A nearly 100 percent medical school placement rate
- A partnership—along with six other institutions like the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the University of Illinois, and Loyola University—at North America’s largest and the world’s top-ranked technology start-up incubator, 1871
- A new core curriculum passed overwhelmingly by Trinity’s faculty, taking seriously both intellectual endeavors *and* vocational preparation—and attracting attention from national foundations and Ivy League universities alike

Additionally, Trinity continues to offer increasingly engaging opportunities for worship experiences on campus, with the continued popularity of student-led Outcry services at 10 p.m. (yes, *10 p.m.*) on Thursday evenings, and a twice-weekly voluntary chapel program that has witnessed almost a tenfold growth in attendance over the past five years. God indeed continues to bless Trinity.

Trinity stands at a unique intersection as a well-regarded Reformed college located in a global metropolis. This presents challenges, of course, but it also gives us opportunity to be salt and light, creators of culture, and agents of God’s grace in an urban and largely secular environment. We are seeing God bless Trinity in amazing ways, with increasing ethnic diversity (now nearly 40 percent of our students), increasing opportunities for educational access (with nearly 37 percent of our students as Pell-eligible), and with outstanding educational outcomes (significantly higher than national average graduation rates and a 98 percent job placement rate after graduation). God indeed continues to bless Trinity.

In fall 2019 Trinity welcomed a freshman class that was 5.5 percent larger than in 2018, and a transfer-student population that was nearly 13 percent larger than in 2018. As of the writing of this report (in February) Trinity appears to be on its way to a promising enrollment for fall 2020 as well (though with much work yet to be done and many prayers yet to be raised). Compared to this point in the previous year, Trinity has doubled its pool of inquiring students, has seen a 35 percent increase in its applicant and deposited student numbers, and has welcomed 50 percent more student visitors to campus. In our adult undergraduate and graduate programs, the enhanced interest in a Trinity education is even greater, with increases ranging from 30 to 300 percent. God indeed continues to bless Trinity.

Some months ago, an article in *Architectural Digest* suggested that architecture is trending once again toward the classical style. That is interesting, and this quote from Robert A.M. Stern, famed architect and former dean of the Yale School of Architecture, is worth noting: “We are always trying not to copy the past, but to interpret it and reinterpret it, as artists often do.”

We at Trinity are artists too, and we cannot simply copy the past. Rather, our task is to interpret and reinterpret where we have come from so that we are true to our missional history while being well connected to this time and place. Trinity needs to constantly pursue purposeful, intentional adaptations

that allow us to be particularly attuned to Trinity's mission in our time—just as Trinity has been throughout its history. This involves connecting the *who* and *why* we are with the *where* and *when* we are. Trinity in 2020 is not exactly what it was in 1960, in part because the world is different in many ways from what it was in that era. What will Trinity—and the world—look like in 2080, when few, if any, of us reading this report in 2020 will still walk this earth? What kinds of hopes do we have for our grandchildren—and our grandchildren's grandchildren?

It is no secret that higher education, as an industry, faces significant challenges. This is especially true for smaller, historically liberal arts colleges, especially in the midwestern United States. Nationwide there are three million fewer high school graduates today than there were in 2011. The story is even more challenging for Christian liberal arts colleges and universities—institutions that generally lack the size and financial strength of larger and better-known ones.

If we want places like Trinity—where an excellent education includes serious engagement with the Christian faith—for future generations, we must make them a priority in our prayers, in our encouragement of students, and in our philanthropy. As we look forward to another sixty years of faithfulness, we respectfully but boldly ask for your continued prayers, encouragement, students, and finances so that Trinity can continue—and continually improve—its faithful service to God's good world.

In this time—and speaking for all of the CRC-affiliated institutions—we need to make clear that your support is more vital than ever. At a time when institutions generally are seeing diminished loyalty and support, our colleges are needed more than ever before for the world in which we live. Without your support there can be no assurance that our institutions will weather the storms in which we find ourselves. Make no mistake: if we *lose* our institutions, we *will not* get them back. If we lose our institutions, what sort of a world will we be leaving for our grandchildren and their grandchildren?

This technically is an annual report to the denomination—but in reality it is a *generational* report to the church and to Christian people everywhere. Now is the time, like never before, to invest in us and to pray for us. And, in return, we endeavor to be faithful witnesses to the broader world and incubators for future leadership in our congregations and denomination.

We invite you to learn more about the things that are happening at Trinity! You can easily do so via our website (trnty.edu) or on our various social media channels (links are available on our website). You are welcome also to send in your questions and discuss these matters personally (president@trnty.edu).

Thank you again for your partnership with and support of Trinity Christian College. We are a better and more faithful place because of our cherished relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and we look forward to many future years of deep and rich partnerships with the church.

Trinity Christian College
Kurt D. Dykstra, president