

2017 Ministry Report

Joyful Obedience



Christian
Reformed
Church

Joyful Obedience

Have you ever played the game Taboo with your family? In this game, you try to get your teammates to guess a word on a card by giving them verbal clues. All the while, you must avoid the use of five forbidden “taboo” words. I suspect that if you were trying to get people to guess the word “obedience,” “joyful” wouldn’t be one of your clues.

Can you remember a time when obeying your parents, a teacher, or another authority figure seemed joyful? Despite having wonderful parents, I don’t recall ever associating joy with obedience. Today, as a parent, I don’t recall seeing the pairing of joy and obedience very often in my children either!

Yet joyful obedience is exactly what God asks of us. Throughout the Bible we read that we are to walk in obedience to what God commands and take delight in doing so. I like how this is phrased in the contemporary testimony *Our World Belongs to God*: “*As covenant partners, set free for joyful obedience, we offer our hearts and lives to do God’s work in the world*” (para. 6).

This describes us, the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Despite our unworthiness, God has covenanted with us, providing us salvation through his Son and empowering us with his Spirit to serve him—a form of obedience designed by God! With gratitude for the new life of freedom we have in Christ, we

can respond with joy—in obedience to God’s will for our lives.

As we consider our work as a denomination, we might ask ourselves, Have we been obedient? Have our actions been a joyful and loving response to our God, who first loved us? I

believe the answer to these questions is a resounding yes!

The following pages describe the joyful obedience we display as a denomination. They include our response to the five callings we’ve identified as part of our Christian Reformed identity: faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship. They also

include statements about the progress we’ve made in our joint ministry plan, *Our Journey 2020*.

My hope is that as you review these pages, your heart will be gladdened. Moreover, my prayer is that as we review together the joyful service to which God has called us, we will be eager to proclaim together the words closing that same section of *Our World Belongs to God*: “*We are confident that the light which shines in the present darkness will fill the earth when Christ appears. Come, Lord Jesus. Our world belongs to you*” (para.6).



Dr. Steven Timmermans
is the executive director
of the Christian Reformed
Church in North America

OUR JOURNEY 2020

DESIRED FUTURE # 4 - IDENTITY



God used a BTGMI radio program to reach Saraswati in India. She was baptized in May.

Saraswati's Salvation

Saraswati, 27, lives in northern India and grew up in a non-Christian home. She was married at a young age after completing the ninth grade, and she has struggled with infertility and a serious illness. Today, however, she has found joy, thanks to a radio program and the working of the Holy Spirit.

After she became ill, Saraswati's family took her to witch doctors in hopes of healing her. The methods they used proved to be useless, and her condition worsened. Saraswati's family began to believe she would not survive.

"The family heard about Brother Rajesh, our radio program producer, through a Christian radio listener," recalls Rev. A.K. Lama, the Hindi ministry leader in India working with Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). "Saraswati's parents called Rajesh, and he immediately prayed for her."

Saraswati professed that following this prayer, she experienced a strong sense of healing. It inspired her to want to know more about Rajesh and his religion.

Rajesh told Saraswati about the BTGMI Hindi radio program, *Asha Ko Raibar* ("Message of Hope"), and she began listening.

"I like to listen, and I appreciate it very much," she said. "I eagerly wait to listen to it every day with a prayerful heart and mind."

As a result of this outreach, Saraswati accepted Christ as her Savior and is now a member of the church in Srinagar, where Brother Rajesh is the pastor. He continues to disciple Saraswati in her faith walk and is pleased to report that she was baptized this past May!

Please be in prayer for Saraswati and her family as they learn more about their newfound faith. Pray too for the people in Saraswati's area who still practice witchcraft, that they may discover the saving grace of Jesus.

COVER PHOTO: Hondia D. Sangma is a student in a sewing class offered by World Renew and its partner NEICORD in Nongladew, India. She is joyful as she now uses the gifts God has given her to make and sell clothes to support her family.

Photo by Sean Hawkey.

OUR JOURNEY 2020

DESIRED FUTURE # 2 - DISCIPLESHIP

The Wild-Ride Adventure of CRC Youth Ministry in 2017

When I was a teen, like so many others in my Christian Reformed church community, I attended catechism, youth group, and the Young Calvinist Convention, and I made profession of faith after my final year of high school. That landscape has certainly changed.

Earlier this year, 55 CRC youth workers from across the United States gathered in Chicago to reflect on the support systems needed for youth ministry today. Because CRC churches in Canada already have a support system in place through a youth ministry pilot project, this Chicago gathering was limited to U.S. attendees.

Participants shared stories and observations, learned about the “Growing Young” approach developed by the Fuller Youth Institute, and explored the idea of appointing a youth ministry champion in each classis who could sharpen their vision, encourage congregational youth and intergenerational initiatives, and provide resources to churches.

The group agreed that stronger support systems for congregational ministry to young people are needed.

“I have two teenage sisters who love Jesus. National data says it is likely only one will keep her faith after high school. That’s not good enough,” said Steven Jansons, who attended the gathering from Classis Columbia.

Bret Lamsma, from Classis Rocky Mountain, agreed. “Because students and families are too busy, the one-size-fits-all youth group doesn’t always work,” he said. “Students and families need various points of contact with a church throughout the week. More people and more commitment are needed for such a structural shift.”

“People like to say that young people are the ‘future of the church.’ I respectfully disagree,” added Brandon Haan from Classis Wisconsin. “They’re the church now. They’re already baptized members of the body, worshiping with us and learning to lead in our congregations. We need to do the best job that we can of helping them grow as disciples of Christ.”

Faith Formation Ministries staff members were moved by the passion and vision evident in the Chicago meeting, and they are responding in joyful obedience to help cultivate the seeds of the support system they saw being planted there.



Ron DeVries, who was recently appointed to serve as the Christian Reformed Church’s first-ever denomination-wide youth ministry catalyzer, helped to organize the CRC youth workers gathering in Chicago.

OUR JOURNEY 2020

DESIRED FUTURE #3 LEADERSHIP

Chess Club Connects Kids to Faith



These kids could be doing anything on a Friday night," Micah Schuurman, a missionary with Resonate Global Mission in Costa Rica, laughed, explaining that the chess club he runs has grown more quickly than he expected. "Not all those things they could be doing are good, but most are more interesting than hanging out with a gringo. I keep waiting for them to stop showing up one day."

But they keep showing up.

Like most teens, the kids who come to the chess club are trying to find their way in the world, navigating challenges at home and at school. "We talk about those challenges together while we play," said Schuurman.

Playing chess has also led the participants to learn about and serve in other ministries that take place at the ministry center where the club is held.

One evening, Esteban and Rubén (*names changed*) stayed long after the chess club usually ends. Esteban's mother had been attending a series of organic gardening workshops at the ministry center, and they were curious to learn more.

"I told them about our composting system, our use of reusable shopping bags, and our commitment to recycling," said Schuurman, "as well as some of our less common practices, like our gray-water system."

A chess club in Costa Rica is opening doors to kingdom work and the spread of the gospel.

That conversation led to the bigger question of why all this creation care is important for the ministry center.

"I shared with them that, for us, creation care is a direct consequence of our faith in God. God created humans to be caretakers of the earth. For us, caring for the creation is a way of expressing love and gratitude to the creator."

Schuurman sat with the teens for nearly an hour, talking about the kingdom of God and God's love for all aspects of his creation. This perspective was new for Esteban and Rubén.

"There are a lot of environmentalists in Costa Rica, and there are a lot of Christians, but there aren't many people who talk explicitly about faith and creation care as things that ought to go hand in hand."

This unusual mix of faith and creation care is part of the Reformed faith and has sparked interest in Costa Rican young people. While chess and conservation may seem like unlikely outreach tools, they are opening doors to kingdom work.

OUR JOURNEY 2020

DESIRED FUTURE #1 - CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Getting to Know *Do Justice*

Do Justice (crcna.org/DoJustice) is a blog run by the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice. It is shaped by a variety of voices and is focused on reflecting about and examining justice issues with a Reformed accent.

Do Justice is an example of what it looks like when communities, churches, and individuals wrestle with injustice. Together we're finding new ideas and perspectives, sharing better ways to engage in justice work, remembering our motivation, and growing our faith.

Here's what two of our *Do Justice* columnists have to say about why they contribute to the conversation:

"I choose to write for *Do Justice* because as followers of Christ and heirs to the promises of God to Abraham, we are blessed to be a blessing; I believe we are called to collectively and individually just living. Living, practicing, and writing about acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God are best done in community, and sharing about these and receiving others' accounts and stories through the *Do Justice* forum is an edifying way to do this. Lastly, I write for *Do Justice* because I believe writing as service and spiritual practice is among the best things I can do to steward the gift of words."

— Joella Ranaivoson,

Do Justice columnist in Grand Rapids, Michigan

"I choose to write for the *Do Justice* blog because it allows me to reflect on issues of concern to the wider CRC community—issues related to social justice, welcome, discipleship, and care for the marginalized—from a Western Canadian perspective, and it gives me the chance to participate in the CRC's long tradition of reflection on and commitment to issues of justice."

—Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning,

Do Justice columnist in Edmonton, Alberta

OUR JOURNEY 2020

DESIRED FUTURE # 5 - COLLABORATION

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE DO JUSTICE BLOG



WE'RE SHARED

Do Justice is shared by the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (based in Ottawa) & and the Office of Social Justice (based in Grand Rapids).



WE'RE YOUNG!

Last quarter, 1/3 of our readers were under the age of 34 and 1/2 were under the age of 44.



WE'RE DIVERSE

Last quarter, 35% of our articles were written by people of color and 58% were written by women!



WE'RE BINATIONAL

1/3 of our readers are Canadian and 2/3 are American—the same as the CRC!
4/8 of our columnists are Canadians.



WE'RE REFORMED

5/8 of our columnists are ordained by the Christian Reformed Church, & most of our 201 writers are CRC members.

dojustice.crcna.org



TLTI trainers retreat in Mongolia

Twenty Years of Multiplication – From Kenya to Mongolia

In June 2017, Albert Strydhorst and Ver Bernardino from Timothy Leadership Training Institute (TLTI), along with Cory Willson from Calvin Theological Seminary, joined a retreat in Mongolia for Advanced Timothy Leadership Trainers. Over 60 trainers representing 48 churches were present.

That, in itself, was amazing. The country of Mongolia had less than 10 known believers in the late 1980s. To have such a large number of churches and believers today, and with so many of them committed to growing in their theological knowledge and church leadership skills, is a blessing from God.

In countries such as Mongolia, where the Christian church is growing rapidly in places of economic need and political restriction, it is common for pastors and other church leaders to be appointed with little or no training. As they engage in challenging ministry, these leaders sense a great need to be trained themselves and to train other lay leaders in their churches. TLTI began in Kenya in the 1990s to address similar needs and has since developed rapidly throughout the world.

In Mongolia there are 21 provinces and nine districts that TLTI's national partner, Steppe by Steppe, has targeted for training. Over the past four years, 27 of these areas have received training, and plans are in place for training in the remaining three areas.

Not only is TLTI training strengthening the churches and leaders in Mongolia, but it is also planning to train pastors and leaders in Russia and Kazakhstan. Please continue to keep this important ministry in your prayers.

Back to God Ministries International

For nearly 80 years, Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) has used technology and media to proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen the church throughout the world on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church.

This ministry uses radios, televisions, cell phones, the Internet, CDs, DVDs, social networking sites, and print media to reach a variety of language groups across the globe. Thanks to people like you, individuals around the world have access to the gospel message in their heart language every single day.

BTGMI's English outreach, ReFrame Media, also produces a family of six programs offering diverse media experiences on a range of topics to help you grow spiritually and find encouragement wherever you are in life.

HIGHLIGHTS

Your ministry shares, offerings, and gifts make it possible for BTGMI to share the gospel in ten languages. Here are some highlights of how BTGMI is helping people grow in their faith journey:

- French ministry continues to grow in West Africa. With ministry partners, BTGMI launched a new French broadcast ministry in Niger while expanding broadcast and volunteer follow-up teams into four new regions in Burkina Faso.
- The Indonesian ministry team is planting listener communities in Indonesia so that seekers and believers can come together in groups to hear God's Word broadcast over shortwave radios.
- A new Japanese video series, *The Church in My Town*, is helping people in Japan find nearby churches for worship and is available for distribution on social media and local church websites. The series breaks down barriers that often hinder Japanese people from visiting a church for the first time. BTGMI also concluded a year of special broadcasting to Kumamoto, Japan, following the April 2016 earthquake.
- Over the past year ReFrame Media produced more than 10 ebooks on a wide range of topics, including movies and the Christian faith, divorce, and forgiveness. These English-language ebooks offer practical resources with biblical content to disciple individuals in their faith walk.

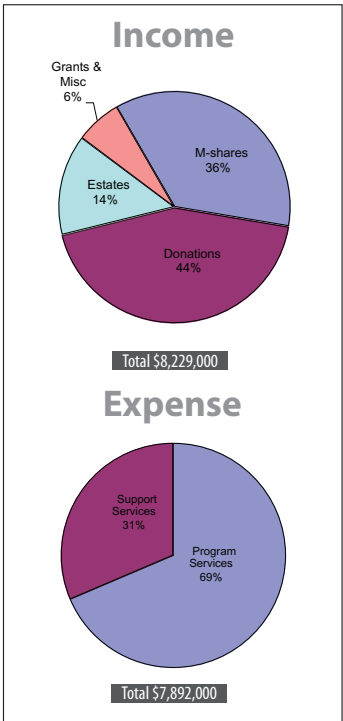


Several new believers came to Christ and were baptized in Japan, thanks to shortwave radio broadcasts.



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Resonate Global Mission

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has a passion for fulfilling the Great Commission. For more than a century the CRC has worked to do this through Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions. In 2017 these two ministries joined and are now continuing their gospel work as Resonate Global Mission! As Resonate Global Mission, we in the CRC have wonderful opportunities to continue amplifying the sound of mission—planting churches and supporting ministry in North America as well as sending missionaries around the globe to share the good news—to the ends of the earth.



A member of a Resonate missionary's class in West Africa

HIGHLIGHTS

- We serve the entire globe with 14 regional teams.
- More than 8,000 new believers came to Christ in the past year.
- More than 600 new communities of faith formed around the world.
- More than 140 missionaries and 250 volunteers serve around the world.
- We began partnering with 39 new churches in North America and started 10 new churches in the past year.
- We support campus ministries on more than 35 different campuses.
- Ministries and churches have access to training, coaching, resources, education, and funding.

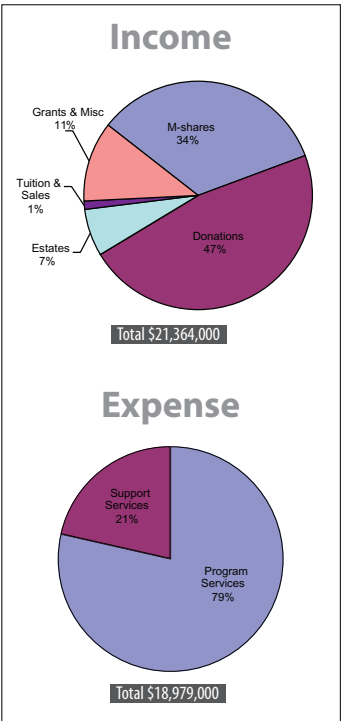
PRAYER REQUESTS

- For church planters, ministry leaders, and missionaries around the world who are preaching the gospel
- That more leaders in the CRC may answer God's call to mission-focused ministry
- That a renewed passion for prayer and mission may grow in the Christian Reformed Church
- That more people may know the saving grace of Jesus
- That God will provide the financial gifts needed to support his mission



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Calvin College

Founded and supported by the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Calvin College is a top-ranked liberal arts college that equips and empowers its more than 3,700 students and 65,000 alumni to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ’s agents of renewal in the world.

With an adventurous core curriculum, today’s Calvin students are free to pursue the wonderings of philosophy, the intricacies of languages foreign and familiar, and the beauty of the world at a molecular level. Calvin is proud to offer 100+ majors and programs. At Calvin, no one major has the upper hand in uncovering truths about God and the world—all are invited into the discovery.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Added a master of accounting degree to its graduate-level offerings. The new program allows students to earn both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree within five years.
- Launched Calvin LifeWork, an innovative, cocurricular program that prepares students for life and work after college. It includes an automatic \$3,000 scholarship for students completing three years of the program.
- Received the Jon C. Dalton Institute on College Student Values Best Practices Award for the college’s Community Partnership Program. The award recognizes an outstanding program relevant to the field of college student character and values development.
- Partnered with three impoverished, underserved Grand Rapids neighborhoods to complete a five-year pilot study with the goal of increasing the mental health self-care of women dealing with depression and anxiety.
- Won a national championship in women’s volleyball and claimed league titles in nine varsity sports, earning the league’s all-sports award for the third consecutive year.
- Graduated more than 900 students representing 60-plus majors within the arts and humanities, social and natural sciences, and professional programs. The most recent annual employment and grad school report shows that 99 percent of Calvin grads are professionally employed or in grad school within nine months of graduation.



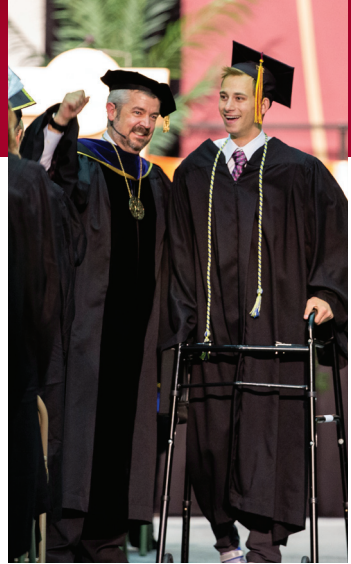
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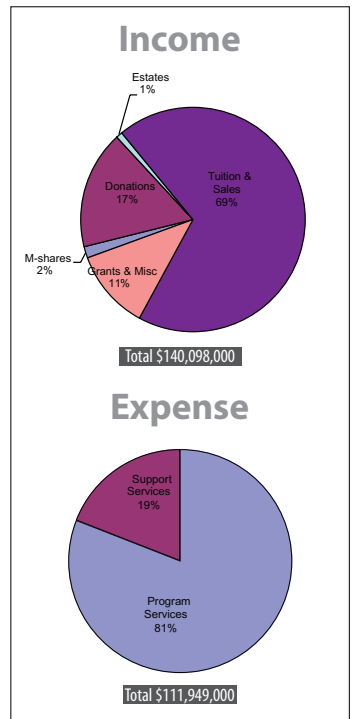
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Garrett Bazany received a standing ovation as he overcame physical limitations and walked to get his diploma.



Faith Formation Ministries

Through your support, Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) encourages and equips local CRC ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their context.



Faith Formation Regional Catalysts.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Eighteen congregations participated in the Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture cohort designed to grow stronger, grace-shaped faith formation cultures.
- Around twenty congregations were part of the Emerging Leaders and Seasoned Saints Cohorts. Half focused on faith formation for people aged 60 or older, and the others focused on emerging leaders (16-30 year olds).
- Faith Formation regional catalysts made presentations to more than 30 classes on the work of FFM and the resources that they offer to congregations.
- More than 25 Faith Formation workshops were hosted in churches from Ripon, California, to Ottawa, Ontario, on topics from youth ministry to sharing faith stories to engaging young adults in the life of the church.
- Faith Formation Ministries staff created four new toolkits: The Intergenerational Church, Professing our Faith, Sharing our Faith Stories, and Using the Building Blocks of Faith. They developed more than a dozen “Ten Ways Tools” -- one-page resources with easy, practical ideas that provide a springboard for conversation, training, and planning around various faith formation challenges. All of these resources are online, available free of charge on the FFM website. FFM also created a four lesson study of the first Q and A of the Heidelberg Catechism entitled “The Big Question.” It is available from Faith Alive Resources.
- Ron DeVries was appointed to serve as the CRC’s denomination-wide youth ministry catalyst.



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Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Theological Seminary prepares men and women to lead in ministry for Christ’s church and his kingdom. Founded over 140 years ago by the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Seminary continues to live out the values of its legacy in which all its teaching and formation grow from a shared understanding of God’s Word as articulated in the Reformed confessions.

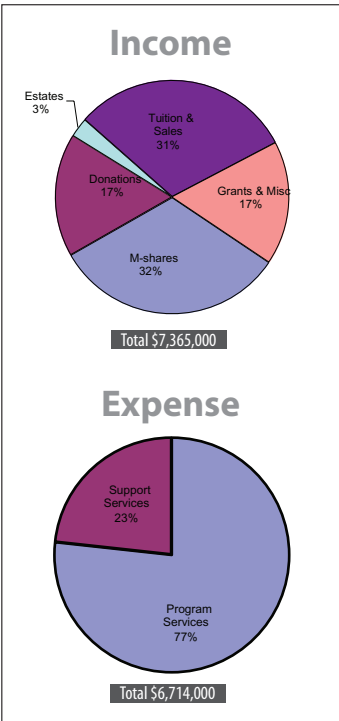
HIGHLIGHTS

- Under the leadership of Rev. Geoff Vandermolen (director, Vocational Formation), the seminary reimagined how they prepare students for ministry. Starting in 2017, all incoming M.Div. and M.A. students will be placed in a local ministry concurrent with their classroom studies. This will provide contextual experience to connect with their academic learning.
- The seminary welcomed visiting professors Gary Burg (New Testament and faculty development specialist from Wheaton College), Young Ahn Kang (philosophical theology from Sogang University, South Korea), and Robert Keeley (discipleship and faith formation from Calvin College).
- The Dig program, a three week, hands-on experience for high school students exploring God’s call on their life, celebrated its inaugural year. Similar to the Facing Your Future program of previous years, the Dig program aims to encourage students in grades 11 and 12 to “uncover their future as they explore how a calling to ministry can be lived out in any vocation.” This year, 24 Dig students came to campus from across North America.
- Among this year’s 126 graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary were 56 students who completed one of two Hispanic Ministry Certificate programs, as well as the seminary’s first cohort of Distance Learning students.



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Worship Ministries

As part of the congregational services offered by the Christian Reformed Church, Worship Ministries seeks to support and strengthen biblically grounded and theologically Reformed worship. It desires that every worshipping community in the Christian Reformed Church in North America experience Spirit-filled gospel proclamation and worship that is directed to God and is characterized by creativity, discernment, spiritual vitality, the faith formation of all worshipers, and a call to serve others.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Coordinated networking and learning conversations among worship leaders.
- Coordinated the creation of ReformationDay500.org to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.
- Eleven Peer Learning Groups met in the United States, Canada, and Ukraine, with 103 participants.
- Sent a monthly e-newsletter to 2,500 people and maintained a Facebook page (CRC Worship Ministries) with 250 members.
- Offered three webinars -- "Leading Worship Teams," "Youth and Worship," and "Work and Worship" -- with 95 people in attendance.
- Held several workshops: "Children and Worship," "Vertical Habits," "Worship in Anxious Times," and "Biblical Foundations for Worship."
- **Reformed Worship**, a quarterly worship magazine with an ecumenical audience, continued in its 31st year with the publication of four print issues; the *Reformed Worship* monthly e-newsletter went to 5,600 subscribers; and *RW*'s Facebook page reached 4,970 followers.



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Aboriginal Ministry

On your behalf, the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC) has the specific role of educating and mobilizing CRC members and congregations to live in reconciled relationships as covenant (treaty) people before our Creator. The committee includes the leaders of three Urban Aboriginal Ministries, a justice and reconciliation mobilizer, and volunteers from across Canada.

CAMC fulfills its mandate by working toward three goals:

- **Awareness and Education** of CRC members and communities about the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the present lived reality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and the need for reconciliation and renewed relationships
- **Engaging and Building Relationships** with our Aboriginal neighbors to better understand each other and journey along the path of justice and right relationships

- **Advocacy and Seeking Justice** with Aboriginal peoples.

Through your support, CAMC also continues to produce resources for churches and members. One new resource being developed is about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is hoped that this resource will provide specific examples of each of the articles in the declaration and will help people grow in understanding and insight as to why we all need such a declaration.

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Centre for Public Dialogue

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue helps Canadian congregations do justice so that each of God's image-bearers has the opportunity to thrive. Its current focus areas are Indigenous justice, human trafficking, refugee justice, religious persecution, and climate change.

HIGHLIGHTS

In the past year, the Centre for Public Dialogue

- together with World Renew and the Office of Social Justice, developed a toolkit to help congregations mark World Refugee Day (crcna.org/WorldRefugeeDay).
- welcomed Cindy Stover as the justice mobilizer for the CRC in Canada, a collaborative position shared by the CRC justice ministries in Canada.
- piloted a new citizenship advocacy training to equip congregational members for advocacy meetings.

- led the KAIROS Blanket Exercise in various Christian Reformed churches, youth groups, and events, in collaboration with the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee.
- partnered with World Renew's Justice Leadership tour in Ottawa to train youth for advocacy.
- provided online action alerts on international development assistance and refugee resettlement, climate change, and Indigenous education with our partners.

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Disability Concerns

Between 17 and 20 percent of North Americans live with a disabling condition. Disability Concerns collaborates with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) Disability Concerns ministry toward a shared goal: helping CRC and RCA churches deepen as communities where everybody belongs and everybody serves. With your support and on your behalf, these ministries

- support a network of volunteer disability advocates.
- create resources for churches.
- consult with churches and ministries.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In the past year, Disability Concern's CRC/RCA Mental Health Task Force created a Guide for Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons (www.crcna.org/clergyleaveguide) to help pastors and congregations navigate a diagnosis of their pastor's having an acute mental illness.
- The same team also curated a list of resources for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.
- Disability Concerns also provides assistance in various ways to Friendship Ministries, an independent ministry for persons with intellectual disability. For example, we have worked with Friendship on the development of new Bible study materials called Together (togethersmall-groups.org) for use by groups of people with and without intellectual disability.



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Office of Social Justice

The Office of Social Justice works with congregations and CRC members to develop a deeper understanding and response to God's call to do justice in our personal and communal lives, as well as in the structures of our societies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- At least 30 congregations in the U.S. and Canada used OSJ's Sanctity of Human Life Sunday worship materials.
- International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church worship materials received at least 750 views.
- About 450 CRC members in 71 congregations across the U.S. and Canada committed to education and advocacy as part of the Climate Witness Project; 25 of those members participated in Evangelical Climate Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C., where they marched, received advocacy training, and met with their members of Congress.
- Individuals sported 1,000 t-shirts, tote bags, and yard signs to spread the message that "Immigrants Are a Blessing, Not a Burden." In addition, individuals sent 10,000 letters to politicians advocating for more welcoming policies, and 100 churches hosted conversations about the broken U.S. immigration system.
- Over 3,600 people follow OSJ's Facebook page, and over 4,100 people have signed up to receive its newsletters on topics such as restorative justice, creation care, and prayers about current events.

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Office of Race Relations

As part of the congregational services offered by the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Office of Race Relations works on your behalf to promote biblical racial reconciliation by designing, organizing, and implementing programs that assist in eliminating the causes and effects of racism within the body of believers.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Author Chris Meehan wrote an account of the struggle of African American families from Lawndale (Ill.) CRC to enroll their children in Timothy Christian School in the 1960s. The book is titled *Growing Pains: How Racial Struggles Changed a Church and School*. The first leg of the book tour launched at Lawndale CRC with panel discussions in May. Panelist Amber Woodruff said, "We have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. It is scary to be a leader. We need to have enough grit to make it."
- On behalf of Race Relations, Shannon Perez and Viviana Cornejo conducted the Blanket Exercise at Inspire 2017 in Detroit, Michigan. Many participants remarked that after listening to these histories their eyes were opened to the horrors that First Nations people experienced.
- Several discussions about Debby Irving's book *Waking Up White* took place at churches and other locations. The discussions sparked greater awareness and a desire to change attitudes and behaviors.

Please pray for the important work of racial healing in many churches throughout the CRC.

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Facebook: facebook.com/crcracerelations

Safe Church Ministry

In the Christian Reformed Church in North America, we believe that *all* people possess the image of their creator and that the Lord is honored as we reflect this value in our communities. With this in mind, we know that we must stand against abuse, which dehumanizes people and leaves devastation in its wake. Safe Church Ministry works on your behalf to equip congregations in abuse awareness, prevention, and response.

Safe Church responds to hundreds of requests for assistance each year. Most of our work involves training and equipping people in their own congregations to protect the vulnerable, create safe spaces of healing, recognize abuse as misuse of power, and respond appropriately in difficult situations of abuse. Safe Church Ministry does this through various training events, consultation, and online resources.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 500 people subscribe to our e-newsletter, and others join in the conversation on The Network (Network.crcna.org/safe-church).
- Safe Church is currently resourcing 24 classis safe church team chairpersons/liaisons; we'd love to see every classis have active safe church leaders, serving congregations in their region.

CONTACT INFO

Website: crcna.org/SafeChurch
Email: safechurchministry@crcna.org
Phone: (616) 224-0735
Facebook: facebook.com/SafeChurchMinistry

World Renew

World Renew extends Christ’s love in word and deed to people around the world who experience hunger, poverty, injustice, and disaster. This ministry is made possible by your big-hearted support, involvement, and prayers for people in need.

In 2017 your grace-filled giving allowed World Renew to walk alongside Christian leaders from 63 churches and community organizations in some of the world’s poorest countries. More than 261,660 people in 21 developing countries participated in World Renew’s long-term community programs, making positive, permanent changes to their health, farming skills, literacy abilities, income, and leadership capacity.

World Renew assisted more than 317,995 people affected by disasters in 20 countries.

All of this was done to be the hands and feet of Jesus, so that through our love, others may see the Savior’s love.

HIGHLIGHTS

- World Renew served people in 33 countries responding to disasters and providing long-term community-based programs that helped 579,655 individuals change their story.
- Through World Renew, 146 North American congregations engaged in biblical justice and advocacy action around such issues as the environment, immigration, and refugee policies.
- World Renew Disaster Response Services volunteers contacted 10,764 disaster-affected households to assess their needs, and repaired or rebuilt 316 damaged homes.
- World Renew’s refugee program helped 261 people begin a new life in Canada.

World Renew does not receive ministry shares. To learn how you can get involved, please visit worldrenew.net.



CONTACT INFO

Website: worldrenew.net

Email: info@worldrenew.net

Phone (US): 800-552-7972 or (616) 224-0740

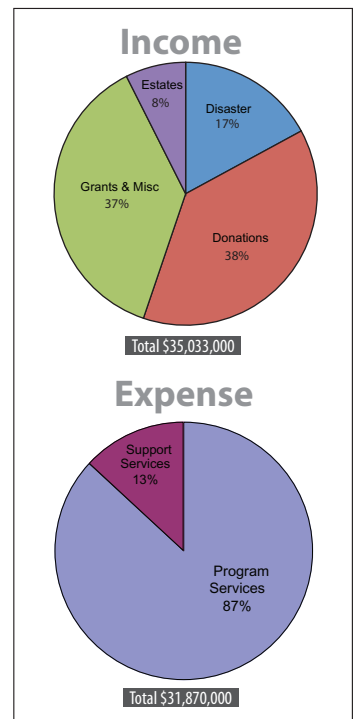
Phone (Canada): 800-730-3490 or (905) 336-2920

Facebook: facebook.com/WorldRenew

Twitter: twitter.com/WorldRenew_net



Santos Garcia, a smallholder farmer in Honduras, shows rich soil from a composter he learned to make in a community group led by a World Renew partner.



Facts, figures, and financial data are preliminary. The World Renew Ministry Report for 2017 will be available in January 2018. Look for it in your church, or visit worldrenew.net/about.



Attendees at the NEXT leadership training event in Port St. Lucie, Florida, in February 2017

Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee is charged with facilitating, coordinating, and offering leadership in the ordination processes for pastors in the Christian Reformed Church.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Endorsement of 39 individuals for approval by Synod 2017 as first-time candidates for the office of minister of the Word. Approval of candidates each year is a highlight of synod and a capstone moment in the Candidacy Committee's work.
- Approval by Synod 2017 of various proposals regarding the oversight of the process of ordaining commissioned pastors. At the request of Synod 2017, a further and more comprehensive report will be prepared dealing with a reformatting of the Church Order articles and supplemental statements pertaining to the office of commissioned pastor.
- Creation of a new English-language orientation program for affiliating pastors, similar to the established program Korean Institute in Ministry (KIM). The new program is called Ethnic Leaders in Ministry (ELIM) and operates in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary.
- Facilitation of retreats and events to orient, welcome, and assimilate current and future pastoral leaders into the denominational family.



Christian
Reformed
Church

CONTACT INFO

Website: crcna.org/candidacy
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Phone: 800-272-5125, ext. 2779

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry extends the Christian Reformed Church's ministry beyond the walls of our congregations to people in crisis. On behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Chaplaincy and Care serves to:

- **endorse**—arranging for training, application, screening, and letters of endorsement for potential employers. We awarded more than \$28,000 in training grants to raise up new leaders in the denomination. We added fourteen newly endorsed chaplains.
- **encourage**—providing ongoing contact, visits, pastoral care and annual conferences to the more than 155 men and women who currently serve as chaplains.
- **enfold**—keeping chaplains and their calling churches connected so that the church benefits from the chaplain's special



Passing of the chaplaincy stole from past director Rev. Ronald Klimp to new director Rev. Sarah Roelofs

skills and the chaplain benefits from the church's prayers and encouragement.

CONTACT INFO

Website: crcna.org/chaplaincy
 Email: chaplain@crcna.org
 Phone: (616) 224-0733

Pastor Church Resources

Pastor Church Resources (PCR) walks alongside Christian Reformed congregations, pastors, and ministry leaders during seasons of growth, transition, or challenge providing resourcing, consultation, and equipping so that individuals and communities may flourish.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A new online process, called PastorSearch, launched mid-year to help churches find pastors and pastors find churches.
- *Secrets of the Double Yoke*, a first-ever retreat for "double ordained couples," was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Eleven couples gathered for a time of sharing, learning, and rest.
- *The Pastor's Spiritual Vitality Toolkit* was produced and is available on the SCE website.
- Almost 100 pastors and ministry leaders engaged in a *ministry fit assessment*.



Eleven doubled ordained couples attended the "Secrets of the Double Yoke" event in April 2017. The couples came from all over Canada and the US.

CONTACT INFO

Websites: crcna.org/pcr
crcna.org/sce (Sustaining Congregational Excellence)
crcna.org/spe (Sustaining Pastoral Excellence)
 Email: pastorchurch@crcna.org
 Phone (US): 877-279-9994, ext. 2805
 Phone (Canada): 800-730-3490, ext. 2746

Learning Together

A newly formed partnership is extending the gospel, equipping churches, and fostering discipleship around the world. As part of the global outreach of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, these three ministries are now working together to broaden learning, share expertise, and open up new areas of ministry.

- **Coffee Break** is a small group Bible discovery program that excels at evangelism and discipleship.
- **Educational Care** is a learning program that encourages and assists educators and schools with limited resources by giving them an opportunity to develop skills and strategies of education that honor God, his creation, and the children in their classrooms.
- **Timothy Leadership Training Institute** works with international and local ministry partners, providing essential training to church leaders worldwide, equipping them to advance the kingdom of God in their congregations and communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Coffee Break trains partners and nurtures partnerships in more than 23 countries and in multiple languages. The simple, Word-centered method of Coffee Break is working well in both global settings and among immigrant populations in North America.
- Educational Care modules have been translated into eight languages and are in the process of being translated into seven additional languages. The modules have been introduced in East Africa, West Africa, Latin America, Egypt, Asia, and South Korea. In total, over 2,000 educators are receiving training, and approximately 327,000 students now receive faith-based education with measurable learning initiatives.
- Timothy Leadership Training Institute celebrated 20 years of ministry in 2017! A training project that started with Calvin Theological Seminary professors and World Missions missionaries in East Africa now serves church leaders in more than 30 languages in over 40 countries worldwide.

CONTACT INFO

Coffee Break

Website: crcna.org/CoffeeBreak

Email: info@coffeebreakministries.org

Phone: (616) 647-5554



Educational Care

Website: tlti.org/ec

Email: ec@crcna.org

Phone: (616) 647-5554



Timothy Leadership Training Institute

Website: tlti.org

Email: tlti@tlti.org

Phone: (616) 647-5554

Facebook: facebook.com/tlti.org



CRC Foundation

The CRC Foundation in Canada and the United States serves the Christian Reformed Church in North America by matching visionary disciples with venture capital, helping to kick-start innovation and collaborative ministry ideas in your neighborhood, church, or classis.

The Foundation does this primarily through **Ignite| Funding Ministry Innovation**. Ignite allows the CRC to explore new ministry ideas and initiatives that advance God's kingdom with minimal sacrifice to current ministries.

In the past year, local congregations have seen an investment of more than \$100,000 in ideas that have opened up new opportunities of ministry in their local communities. The CRC Foundation works in concert with the CRCNA Council of Delegates and is legally established in the United States and Canada.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Invested \$10,000 in the "Mobile Living Room" project, which involved the renovation of a bus that supports homeless persons and struggling neighbors of Awake CRC in Seattle, Washington.
- Invested \$3,000 in "Breathing Space," a ministry to students at Michigan State University and community neighbors who need a place to reflect, breathe, and study God's Word.
- Provided \$10,000 to Oasis Community CRC in Winter Garden, Florida, looking to start a day-care program in a neighborhood of more than 30,000 unchurched neighbors.



CONTACT INFO

crcna.org/foundation

Phone (US): 877-272-6204

Phone (Canada): 800-730-3490

Facebook: [Facebook.com/ignitefund](https://www.facebook.com/ignitefund)

Faith Alive

Under the Faith Alive Christian Resources imprint, the CRC offers quality resources that are developed with a Reformed perspective and call people to follow Christ.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Faith Alive continues to point churches to its current Sunday school curriculum, DWELL. The DWELL website (DwellCurriculum.org) provides coordinators and leaders with the support resources they need, and Faith Alive's curriculum consultant is available to support churches.
- A new financial-assistance program, called DWELL Assist, launched in 2017 to assist CRCs who are not using DWELL curriculum because of costs. Churches with financial need can apply to the program in order to have their curriculum costs reduced.
- About 75 percent of CRCs have people using the Digital Library (crcna.org/Library), a free source for hundreds of digital titles. CRC churches and members also receive a 15 percent discount on print-copy purchases of most Faith Alive titles.
- With over 50,000 copies sold, the Lift Up Your Hearts hymnal continues to be used in hundreds of churches and ministries.
- The CRC's Profession of Faith Certificate was redesigned to offer a fresh look and wording that reflects the CRC's new communion practices.

CONTACT INFO:

Websites:

FaithAliveResources.org

DwellCurriculum.org

TheBanner.org

ReformedWorship.org

LibrosDesafio.org

Orders: 800-333-8300

Facebook: [Facebook.com/FaithAlive](https://www.facebook.com/FaithAlive)

Twitter: [Twitter.com/FaithAlive](https://twitter.com/FaithAlive)

The Network

Ministry is hard, but we aren't meant to go it alone. The Christian Reformed Church in North America is big, but The Network (crcna.org/network) makes it possible to make one-on-one connections.

Since its start in 2010, The Network has been debunking the myth that we need to have it all together. Yes, we'd like to have perfect youth ministries, everyone involved in small groups, and worship songs that are embraced by all. Yet we all know that life is messy.

In ministry, as in life, we learn things along the way. We make mistakes. We find things that work and things that don't. The beauty of The Network is in the community that is built when we ask questions, share resources, and compare notes. In fact, since the site began, readers have asked 900+ ministry questions, of which over 95 percent have been answered.

We'd love to have you join this growing community today!

CONTACT INFO

Website: crcna.org/network

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Facebook: facebook.com/CRCNetwork

Twitter: twitter.com/CRCNetwork

The Banner

The *Banner*, the official magazine of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, continues to enjoy a wide and diverse readership both in print and online. *The Banner* provides a forum to keep in touch with one another and to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) so that we may grow and learn from each other.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A free *Banner* App is now available for mobile devices, allowing readers easy access to our online articles, especially if they don't receive *The Banner* in print.
- Two collections are available in *The Banner* Study Series—free online resources with questions for discussion: *Reformed Basics* and *Reformation Themes*. thebanner.org/study-series.
- In its monthly column "Together Doing More," *The Banner* provides ongoing updates on the ministries we engage in together as a denomination.
- Feature articles, news, and a variety of columns round out the synodical mandate to inform, inspire, educate, and challenge readers.
- Readers contribute through "Letters to the Editor," "In My Humble Opinion," and lively discussions in the online Comments section following each posted article.

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Twitter: twitter.com/crcbanner

MINISTRY SHARES RECEIPTS & GIFT INCOME

2016

2017

Back to God Ministries

Ministry Shares	3,050,000	2,963,000
Gift and offerings	3,166,000	3,576,000
Estate Gifts	2,939,000	1,161,000
Grants/Miscellaneous	187,000	529,000
Total	9,342,000	8,229,000

Calvin College

Ministry Shares	2,367,000	2,324,000
Gift and offerings	21,959,000	23,853,000
Estate Gifts	1,936,000	1,285,000
Tuition/Grants	99,567,000	112,636,000
Total	125,829,000	140,098,000

Calvin Seminary

Ministry Shares	2,449,000	2,378,000
Gift and offerings	1,210,000	1,261,000
Estate Gifts	140,000	198,000
Tuition/Grants	3,844,000	3,528,000
Total	7,643,000	7,365,000

Resonate Global Mission

Ministry Shares	7,445,000	7,215,000
Gift and offerings	10,228,000	10,046,000
Estate Gifts	2,712,000	1,429,000
Grants/Miscellaneous	854,000	2,674,000
Total	21,239,000	21,364,000

World Renew

Gift and offerings	11,662,000	13,657,000
Disaster Gifts	3,692,000	6,119,000
Grants	12,206,000	13,385,000
Estate gifts	6,028,000	2,662,000
Total	33,588,000	35,823,000

Congregational Services

Ministry Shares	5,474,000	5,395,000
Gift and offerings	940,000	929,000
Estate Gifts	0	0
Sales/Miscellaneous	7,021,000	6,568,000
Total	13,435,000	12,892,000

Denominational Services

Ministry Shares	2,296,000	2,355,000
Gift and offerings	602,000	85,000
Estate Gifts	0	0
Grants/Miscellaneous	1,754,000	1,868,000
Total	4,652,000	4,308,000

Foundation

Gift and offerings	455,000	220,000
Estate Gifts	5,000	0
Grants/Miscellaneous	2,000	8,000
Total	462,000	228,000

Special Assistance Fund

Ministry Shares	251,000	250,000
Gift and offerings	0	000
Grants/Miscellaneous	47,000	3,000
Total	298,000	253,000

Gifts Summary 2017

The money you give for ministry shares provides about \$23 million each year to support programs that enable your church to send missionaries around the world, advocate on behalf of people with disabilities, foster faith formation in persons of all ages, train chaplains, use media to spread the gospel, and much more.

The ministry-share program costs very little to administer and enables everyone in your congregation to participate in our shared ministry. Whether you have substantial assets or a fixed income, your gifts to ministry shares allow church members to work together to have a lasting impact around the world.

This past year, ministry-share gifts were down nearly \$420,000 in comparison to the previous year but still generated \$22.9 million in revenue. This was about \$425,000 more than was anticipated in the annual budget. Thank you.

In addition to ministry-share support, special church offerings and individual gifts (not including support for disaster response projects) generated \$53.5 million for Christian Reformed Church ministries. This was up \$4.1 million from the prior year.

Gifts in response to emergency and disaster situations also increased over previous years. In the wake of wars, refugee crises, food shortages, earthquakes, and hurricanes, World Renew received \$6.1 million in designated disaster relief funding. This was an increase from \$3.7 million for the previous year.

Thank you for making generous financial support a part of your joyful obedience to God's call. We are grateful too for all who continue their commitment to ministry through bequests through their will or trust. In the past year, estate gifts provided \$6.9 million of generous support to our shared ministry.

Our Journey of Joyful Obedience

We are on a journey together as a denomination, listening and responding to God's call with joyful obedience. Some of the most interesting journeys happen when you know where you are going but are not exactly sure how to get there. This is the kind of trip we are engaging in together as the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Our Journey 2020 is the name of the CRC's current ministry plan. In developing the plan, CRC members and leaders across Canada and the United States shared about the challenges their churches are facing. These challenges identified five goals, or "desired futures," for *Our Journey 2020* that we are describing as church and community, discipleship, leadership, identity, and collaboration. These desired futures show where we need to go.

The various ministries and agencies of the CRCNA have been making progress on these goals at the denominational level. The preceding pages of this report show some examples of how our ministries are doing.

For instance, we are helping churches flow into their communities through a new mission agency, Resonate Global Mission, with church planting and community outreach as part of its primary mission. We are fostering discipleship of people of all ages through new faith formation toolkits and a gathering for youth ministry leaders. We are identifying servant leaders at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and we are equipping and supporting them through Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, and Candidacy.

Collaboration is growing through ministries such as Coffee Break, Timothy Leadership Training Institute, and Educational Care working together. Through the *Do Justice* blog, CRC people are learning and talking about justice. And through partnerships around the world and at home, communities are receiving assistance, developing capacity for health and economic improvement, learning about injustice and abuse, and growing closer to the Savior as together we seek to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8). In all of this our CRC identity is being strengthened as we learn about and support ongoing ministry in Jesus' name.

Individual congregations have also been working toward these desired futures. How they get there — and where they go first — has been different for each congregation. **To learn more about our journey together and to find inspiration for your congregation, visit crcna.org/OurJourney.**



*our journey
2020*

Our Faith

Like a great tree, our faith is a living, growing thing. It flows from the Father's great love for his creation, epitomized in the giving of his Son, who walked among us, was crucified, and rose from the dead to ascend and rule as the King of kings and Lord of lords at the Father's right hand. We now walk by faith in Christ through the ongoing work of the Spirit, a foretaste of what is to come: the finished, new creation.

Our faith is rooted in the Old and New Testaments, the inspired Word of God, an infallible anchor for our lives. Three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—grew from our biblical roots to form a sturdy trunk that unites us with brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

The Reformed branch of our Christian faith has espoused itself for centuries in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. More recently the Christian Reformed Church adopted Our World Belongs to God and the Belhar Confession as contemporary testimonies to serve as dramatic statements of faith that speak to moral matters in our time.

Fed by the river of life, this great tree of our faith continues to send out branches and bear fruit. In the Christian Reformed Church in North America, we are experiencing that growth in transformed lives, transformed congregations, and a fresh vision for the future. Rooted and sturdy, we are becoming ever new.