

# Gathering 2016



**CANADIAN GATHERING 2016**  
KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

# WHAT



- One of three Gatherings being held by the CRCNA in 2016.
- An opportunity to come together to plan, dream, discern and pray.
- Held from May 6–8, 2016, at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario.
- The Gatherings were recommended in a report—"Cultivating Binationality in the CRC"—that was adopted by the Board of Trustees in May 2014.
- The two other gatherings will be held in the US and focus around the themes of diversity and youth.
- The intention is to hold these gatherings every three years.

# WHY



For the purpose of bringing churches together to stimulate conversations about the mission and purpose God has for local congregations and the CRCNA at large.

## Goals:

1. To help shape and express the voice of the CRC in Canada in relation to the denomination as a whole.
2. To connect and inspire local, regional and denominational ministries by telling our stories, sharing our priorities and imagining a shared future.

# PARTICIPANTS



- Almost 200 people representing classes, churches, ministries, agencies and educational institutions.
- Active participants were local church leaders from across the CRC in Canada who are active serving in local, regional and denominational contexts (others were there to connect and observe)
- Each local church council was invited to nominate at least one individual to the stated clerk of their classis.
- The Canadian Gathering Committee made final selections looking for a healthy demographic balance of clergy and lay leaders from the church. Up to 12 representatives were chosen from each classis.

# THE PROGRAM

- Worship
  - Keynote Addresses
  - Storytelling
  - Breakout Sessions
  - Greetings from ecumenical leaders
  - Open Plenary with CRC Leaders
  - Ministry Fair
  - Book Fair
  - Sunday morning commissioning and communion service
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# WORSHIP & PRAYER



## WORSHIP: JEREMY ZEYL AND BODY + SOUL COLLECTIVE

Body and Soul Collective is led by Jeremy Zeyl. The Collective seeks to create artistic, thoughtful, formative and original worship music. The Body and Soul Collective worships, writes and records at Talbot Street Church in London, Ontario. Many of the songs are based on confessions or creeds of the Christian faith, inviting all denominations and people.



## PRAYER

The Canadian Gathering was bathed in prayer by a team of intercessors, both onsite and offsite, praying in the advancement of the Kingdom of God and praying out the plans and schemes of the enemy. Intercessors listened for and helped to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit.

# OPENING – SETTING THE TONE



**DARREN ROORDA**  
*Canadian Ministries Director*

- A reflection on Romans 8:8-9a. “Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.”
- “This event is not about promotion of how great the CRC is: We are a broken people. Instead, this weekend is about living in the space between the sin we lament and the grace we find.”
- “We are not Christians of desperation. We are Christians of inspiration.”

## KEYNOTE 1:

# OUR MINISTRY CONTEXT



## DR. SYLVIA KEESMAAT

*Adjunct Professor of Biblical Studies at Toronto School of Theology and the Institute for Christian Studies.*

If we're doing contextual ministry that pays attention to where we are in our villages, in our towns, in our country...

- Who are the people at the margins who show us who God is?
- Who are the powerless people who tell us about the God that we image?
- Who are the people with no voice that we need to be bending down to hear, or walking along with so that we can hear their story of who God is and how God has worked?

# STORYTELLING

## ARIE VAN EEK

*How starting connections with First Nations people in North End Winnipeg in the 70s has led to enduring ministry.*

## DARREN ROORDA

*Commitment to making the Canadian Ministries office a servant to churches in achieving their ministry priorities.*

## HILDA VANDERKLIPPE

*Village Church's (Thorold) new quarterly activity of Random Acts of Kindness.*

## BERNADETTE ARTHUR

*Spoke about the power of vulnerability in making missional connections.*

## MIKE HOGETERP

*The CRC's credibility and recognition in the Truth and Reconciliation process is the fruit of how it has worked with indigenous people.*



# TABLE DISCUSSIONS: SHARING OUR STORIES



- Prayer time
- What ministry has persisted and endured in your congregation over many years?
- What ministry innovations and initiatives have begun in your congregation and classis?
- What has caught your passion and imagination for ministry and community engagement recently?
- How familiar are you with the CRC's ministry plan: Journey 2020?
- How well does it sum up your hopes for the CRCNA as we move forward together?
- Prayer and worship

## KEYNOTE 2:

# SHARING MINISTRY PRIORITIES IN SECULAR CANADA



## DR. GLENN SMITH

*Urban Missiologist, Mission Montreal, Director of Christian Direction*

- A challenge to exegete (learn about) our communities.
- Secularism is characterized by
  - Hyper individuality
  - Hyper sexualization
  - Hyper consumerism
- We need to minister by
  - Intentional ecumenical partnerships
  - Being the community church that witnesses to the kingdom
  - Employing all manner of mixers to engage those outside the church

“The church of Jesus Christ is Missional or she is not the church.”

## TABLE DISCUSSIONS: STORIES FROM CONGREGATIONS



- How would you describe the local surrounding cultures in your geographical community?
- How does your congregation understand community engagement?
- What is an outward focus for your congregation?
- Where can you begin to look outwardly?
- Prayer

## KEYNOTE 3:

# CONTEXTUALIZATION IN ACTION: THE CANADIAN URBAN & INDIGENOUS CONTEXT



## MICHELLE VISSER-WIKKERINK

*Executive Director of the Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg*

- A request to remove our shoes to make us feel just a little uncomfortable.
- “Kindness has become a word that I hope shapes my life”.
- Stories of people she came to minister to: “They took me in. They fed me. They clothed me. They took care of me.”
- The Four Directions: A prayer structure to thank the Creator.
- Indigenous people care more about the heart of the story than the facts.
- Understanding and appreciating the symbolism and culture of others helps us to relate and connect more deeply. Just because you don’t understand something doesn’t make it wrong.

# GREETING FROM ECUMENICAL LEADERS

Greetings and comments from Ecumenical Leaders:

- Reformed Church in America – Marijke Strong, Executive Secretary
- United Church –John Young, Executive Minister, Theological Leadership
- Presbyterian Church in Canada – Jennifer De Combe, Associate Secretary
- Evangelical Fellowship of Canada –Bruce J. Clemenger, President
- The Canadian Council of Churches – Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, General Secretary
- KAIROS Canada –Jennifer Henry, Executive Director

# OPEN PLENARY QUESTION & RESPONSE WITH CRCNA LEADERS



**Left to right:**

Darren Roorda, Canadian  
Ministries Director

Kathy Vandergrift  
President, CRC Board of  
Trustees

Steve Timmermans  
Executive Director, CRCNA

## Presentation of “Our Journey 2020 Ministry Plan:

- Desired Future 1: Church & Community
- Desired Future 2: Discipleship
- Desired Future 3: Leadership
- Desired Future 4: Identity
- Desired Future 5: Collaboration

## Question Time:

- Why the gap between the painful debate at Synod and the local church’s desire for flexible, collaborative ministry?
- How can local congregations keep covenant with the denomination?
- How do we wrestle with lifespan of ministries as we evaluate new opportunities?
- How do we get people excited about reformed heritage and theology?
- How do we decide how we share and what we share with ecumenical partners?

# WHAT WE ARE HEARING IS...

## **Darren Roorda & Planning Team:**

- There is a great desire to be more outward than inward focused, fully engaged and not insular.
- Many of us are feeling ill-equipped as leaders and need more connection.
- A desire to learn to mentor.
- A pleasure in allowing the Spirit to guide us.
- In Canada, people are more passionate about being followers of Jesus than being members of a church.
- A desire to be relevant, reformed and engaged in community, both locally and as a denomination.

## **Participants:**

- More excitement about God's work in the CRC than we have ever heard.
- We are moving into a new phase in the Canadian context (from immigrant culture to wider culture).
- A desire for sharing the gospel to transform communities.
- A desire for more regional collaboration in ministry.
- Resources needed to enable mentoring and discipleship.
- The need for more meaningful and passionate discussion about mission and ministry than is currently happening at the classis level.
- Celebration of involvement of youth and young adults and a challenge to provide more opportunities for engagement.
- The support structure of the denomination is strengthening.
- A call to embrace those at the margins.
- What is CRC identity in different cultural contexts (i.e., Chinese)?

# WHAT INSPIRES YOU IS...

## **Darren & Planning Team:**

- Enthusiasm for the CRC.
- A recognition that leadership does not just come from clergy.
- The church is about more than programs.
- Stories from healthy local churches can shape the direction of the denomination.
- Gathering participants are ready and willing to embrace their own brokenness and share grace and love for the brokenness of others.

## **Participants:**

- An intersection between the direction of local churches and the ministry plan.
- Sharing stories within church and between churches.
- A shift from inward to outward focus.
- 3DM Huddles and missional communities.
- A desire for more collaboration between churches and sharing resources within classes and ecumenically.
- A move toward understanding and engaging with communities.
- The equipping of leaders (e.g., LDN) and discipleship.
- A growing desire for dependence on the word.
- Leaving titles at the door.
- Diversity of gender and age at the Gathering.

# WHERE WE SEE THE SPIRIT LEADING

## **Darren & Planning Team:**

- Into relationship between churches and the denomination and ecumenically.
- Into formal and informal mentorship.
- More engagement in what is happening in the Canadian context.
- Toward measured confidence and away from fear of risk.

## **Participants:**

- Classis Toronto – Staying put in a community where it would be tempting to sell valuable church property.
- To more events like the Gathering where churches can communicate and collaborate.
- A calling to a deeper personal commitment to connect as brother and sisters.
- To connect in meaningful ways with younger people and families who are reconnecting with church and applying their own leadership style driven by the gifts of the spirit.
- A caution to not rest on our laurels as a denomination – there's a long, humble worthwhile road ahead.
- God will equip us as churches and as a denomination to make an impact.
- Toward more small group discussions within churches, at the classis level and up.
- Toward looking at leadership differently – ignoring age and recognizing gifts and talents.
- To honour the unique gifts and abilities of people with disabilities and differing abilities.

# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Commemorative Gathering Video
- Gathering Presentation Slides (in PPT and PDF formats)
- Gathering Report (PDF and Print)
- Videos of Keynote Addresses
- Audio of Proceedings
- Church media coverage, blog coverage, and Twitter coverage of the event (visit [crcna.org/canadian-gathering-2016](http://crcna.org/canadian-gathering-2016))