



MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2016

Dear Friends,

As Steve Timmermans and I get further into our work as a new leadership team for the Christian Reformed Church, we are more and more convinced that local ministry and regional efforts need to be a focal point of our denominational life and identity.

Toward that end we are sponsoring and facilitating a number of experiments in order to learn how “local and regional ministry support and partnership” can best occur. We have received generous grants for some of these initiatives, and other initiatives coming out of strategic direction given by Synod 2015 and by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

We recognize that some of your classes and/or congregations in your classis are participating in some of the projects. We are grateful for your willingness to be involved and for the ways your learnings will eventually be able to bless us all. For many of you the awareness of these projects is minimal. This letter is intended to help make all of you cognizant of these experiments, so that you can pray for them and so that you can volunteer as a region or as a congregation, as opportunity and interest are present.

Here is a list of initiatives and projects, along with contact persons, if you want more information about any of them:

- A grant called the “Connections Project for Resourcing Regionally” will use clusters of churches in select classes in order to identify and serve as catalysts for healthy ministry life in the given region. The project coordinator is Lis Van Harten (lvanharten@crcna.org).
- A grant has been given to the CRC and RCA to facilitate what is called “The Reformed Leadership Initiative,” intending to create peer learning groups of regional and ethnic minority pastors and leaders from the RCA and CRC. The CRC side of the project is coordinated by Denise Posie (dposie@crcna.org).
- A team from Pastor-Church Relations is moving ahead on what is called the “Better Together Project,” addressing ways to train, support, and facilitate Church Counselors, Church Visitors, and Regional Pastors. The contact person for this is Norm Thomasma (nthomasma@crcna.org).
- Calvin Seminary is continuing their sponsorship of the “Renewal Lab” to help clusters of congregations determine and implement strategies for renewing their local ministries. The project coordinator is Keith Doornbos (kdoornbos@calvinseminary.edu).
- Faith Formation, as a new ministry of the CRCNA, is actively holding workshops in congregations and regional settings in order to help develop a robust discipleship strategy that fits the local context. The project coordinator is Syd Hielema (shielema@crcna.org).

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- Worship Ministries, another of the new ministries of the CRCNA, has 13 worship peer learning groups underway across North America. You can find out more about these by contacting Joyce Borger (jborger@crcna.org).
- An initiative of Home Missions in the Great Lakes region is offering help with a tool called the "Healthy Church Survey," followed by congregational coaching. For more information contact Amy Schenkel (aschenkel@crcna.org).
- A pilot project will be launched in 2016 involving classis leadership and leaders from congregations within the classis, with a goal of increasing both local ministry and classis health. A cluster of three classes will be selected. The project coordinator is Karl Westerhof (kwesterhof@crcna.org).
- A team is working to consult with deacons and design tools to help deacons imagine and implement strategies that vitalize their work in response to community needs. There is currently a limited scope to this consultation, but we hope for significant tools to emerge that will be useful on a broad scale. The coordinator of these efforts is Andy Ryskamp (aryskamp@crcna.org).
- The Canadian Ministries Director, Darren Roorda, is working with various teams and initiatives in our Canadian classes and congregations that will enhance ministry in the Canadian context and also serve as models and catalysts for churches and classes throughout the denomination. You can learn about this by browsing www.crcna.org/Canada, and you can contact Darren Roorda (droorda@crcna.org) with questions and words of encouragement.

In addition to the initiatives listed above, growing attention will be given to supporting and raising up ethnic minority leadership and ethnic minority leadership support networks. Our prayer is that we will grow in the experience of being a diverse family of God.

In some sense having so many initiatives underway is overwhelming. Yet, it is also exciting to see and imagine what we may learn and do together in the next two years that will result in more effective collaboration among congregations, and within a region.

Please distribute this letter throughout your classis, along with my invitation that interested persons may contact me, and the others referred to. And, if anyone has thoughts that they believe will be helpful, I would love to hear them.

In Christ's Service,



Colin Watson

Director of Ministries and Administration