

MINISTRY REPORT

TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS



Christian
Reformed
Church

SUMMER 2015

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Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

In the first few months of 2015 we have completed one chaplain endorsement and we are poised to complete 4-5 in the next month or two. As we endorse new chaplains at a rate of approximately one per month, and with the number of retirees tapering off, we have netted about 10% growth in our total number of chaplains during the past few years. Our current number of 131 chaplains is an all-time high and seems poised to continue to grow.

We annually bring together many of these chaplains at a three-day conference in Grand Rapids, MI. This year, on May 28-30, we had over 100 total participants. One of the key-note speakers is a well-known researcher and writer in the field of hospital chaplaincy, Dr. Harold Koenig. We explored a new and more affordable format this year, with the presentation brought to us, and broadcast as it occurred, in the form of a webinar. Chaplains who were unable to attend (and others from the Reformed Church in America) were able to join in remotely.

We continue to see an increase in applications for endorsement and for grants to receive CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education), training to be a chaplain. Fortunately, we are also seeing an increase in giving to our Development Fund that allows us to provide these grants. A growing percentage of those gifts are beginning to come from our current chaplains who may have benefited from these grants in the past. Local churches, especially those who act as “calling churches” of our chaplains, are also increasing their collections for donations to this fund.

The image of, respect for, and professionalism of chaplaincy seems to be on the rise in all denominations and faith groups. We find this exciting because it provides a powerful way for the church to serve individuals in crisis and influence the institutions in which they are found. This makes it a powerful and growing (though often invisible) area of ministry to God’s world.

Disability Concerns

This fall, CRC and Reformed Church in America (RCA) Disability Concerns ministries will celebrate six years of working together. Our work together has focused especially on awareness and education, leadership training, networking, and public policy.

Awareness and Education – We started our work together by jointly publishing our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, which has won an Award of Merit the past two years from the Associated Church Press. We published first and second editions of *Inclusion Handbook: Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves*, which is used by disability advocates and church leaders to understand ways of engaging people with disabilities in all of church life. We share resources on our websites (crcna.org/disability and rca.org/disability), and we post regular updates to our shared Facebook page (facebook.com/disabilityconcerns), which we encourage you to “Like”.

Leadership Training – Over the six years, we have co-sponsored over 15 training events for disability advocates and other church leaders in various locations including Woodstock, Hamilton, Kitchener, and Bowmanville, Ontario; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Glendale, Arizona; Temecula, Anaheim, and Ripon, California; and Pella, Iowa.

Networking – Together, our ministries have identified and provided training for over 700 people to serve as church and regional disability advocates across the U.S. and Canada in the two denominations. These advocates serve their churches and classes by promoting the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the congregational life.

Public Policy (U.S.) – Both of our ministries are members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC), based in Washington, D.C., whose mission is “to mobilize the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the President and Administration, and society at large.” Our ministries are both represented at monthly IDAC meetings by CRC member, Gary Mulder.

Office of Social Justice

Creation and climate care, human trafficking in South Asia, and a broken U.S. immigration system continue to be major education and advocacy topics for OSJ.

Recently our denominational building in Grand Rapids was awarded U.S. Energy Star certification – only the second denominational headquarters in the U.S. to receive that certification. We’ve saved well over \$100,000 in the last few years and emitted far less greenhouse gas than before. We’re proud to be part of a denomination that practices what it preaches!

For churches and small groups that want to seriously dig into issues around creation and climate care, OSJ and World Renew have produced an excellent series of 4 short videos and companion discussion guide. The videos combine on-the-ground footage and interviews from Kenya with study materials to help groups and individuals not only hear the stories of Kenyan Christians, but begin to think about how they can respond.

The video resource and downloadable discussion guide can be found at: climate-conversation.org.

Our Executive Director, Steve Timmermans and the U.S. Director of World Renew, Andrew Ryskamp, have urgently addressed the U.S. State Department and the Obama Administration on behalf of Rohingya refugees – Muslims fleeing persecution

in Myanmar (Burma) – who are being ruthlessly exploited by human traffickers. Thousands have died at sea as their boats are discovered and turned away from Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The U.S. and others are responding with search and rescue operations as well as refugee assistance. The long-term solution lies in changing the cynical policies of disenfranchisement and abuse perpetrated by Myanmar’s present government.

You can add your voice to this campaign at: crcjustice.org.

Pastor-Church Relations

For the past year, several staff members of both Pastor-Church Relations and Home Missions have been part of a team called “Assisting Churches in Transition.” Together we are exploring ways to support and resource congregations which are undergoing various kinds of transitions, recognizing that transition is normal in the life of a church. Transitions can be both positive and life-giving as well as difficult and painful.

The team has identified several ways to assist churches in transition. One is to develop a process by which requests for assistance are acknowledged, directed to the right person, and attended to in a timely and meaningful way. A companion project is creating a detailed list of types of transitions (e.g. changes in community demographics, changes in the makeup of the congregations, looking for a new pastor, refocusing or determining vision/mission/purpose, and many more). Items on the list will be accompanied by the name of a person to talk with as well as available resources for each topic. A third project pertains to walking alongside congregations as they discern and make decisions regarding their future. Various questions might arise relative to a church’s future, including the possibility of discontinuing. If a church decides to close, conversations are welcomed and resources are available, including a guide that names and addresses tasks that need attention. The possibility of becoming a “legacy church” is encouraged so that churches might view their closing as a way to give life to another kingdom ministry.

If your church is seeking assistance during a time of transition, we would like to hear from you. A place to start is to contact Jeanne Kallemeyn at jkallemeyn@crcna.org or 616 726 1152.

Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention and response.

270+ interactions with individuals and congregations were recorded by Safe Church. Each month 400+ people receive our newsletter; prayer partners receive a prayer guide; and blogs are posted <http://network.crcna.org/safe-church>.

In January, Safe Church partnered with Disability Concerns to offer a presentation highlighting a study about the increased risk of abuse to those with disabilities, and to hear testimony from a courageous woman about God’s grace to her in her own struggle. We also partnered with the Office of Social Justice, Race Relations, and Pastor-Church Relations to offer *Restorative Practices for Congregations*.

In February, Safe Church presented a workshop at Calvin Seminary, *You’re More Powerful than You Think: the role of power in ministry relationships*. We also attended a conference in Georgia with Samaritan SafeChurch to explore greater partnership in helping congregations join the movement to end child sexual abuse. One in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before age 18. Where is the Church?

In March, Safe Church participated in a meeting to rethink safe church ministry in Classis Lake Erie. Safe Church also presented an all-day workshop in Classis Columbia on the topic of child sexual abuse.

Ongoing work: Safe Church develops resources for congregations. *Sample Training for Councils and Church Leaders* was created by a Canadian team member to help leaders understand the dynamics and impacts of abuse. The resource was adapted for general use and posted to our website, www.crcna.org/safechurch. Click on the left sidebar where it says *Resources for Safe Church Teams*. Pray for wisdom in our congregations in abuse prevention and response.

Sustaining Pastoral and Congregational Excellence

Staff from SPE and SCE is participating in the Better Together Project. The project's mandate is to create partnerships and vitality through resourcing classical leaders—who will then be better equipped to engage with pastors and congregations. The mandate comes from Synod 2012's request that ways be developed so the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR), or others, can become involved more quickly in situations where the pastor-congregation relationship is beginning to fray.

To date, the Better Together Team has connected with over 400 leaders in almost all of the classes. Regional pastors (the pastors' pastor) reported that relationships are the key piece of their work, but challenges such as distance, lack of time, and little-to-no funding for travel and hospitality make such relationships difficult. Church visitors shared that the practice of church visiting has come to have negative connotations and that regular visits aren't as frequent as they should be. Stated clerks (clerks of classes) said that traditional assumptions about the roles and rules for pastors need a fresh look. Mentors of new pastors told the team that the way the relationship between pastors and congregations is conceived needs to be re-examined. All four of these groups of leaders stressed the importance of their work, and told stories of great things taking place. There's much excitement for the future!

The Better Together Team is making recommendations to denominational ministries for each group of classical leaders they're working with. The hope is that the work that has begun will continue to grow and that classical leaders will be better resourced and equipped to work with pastors and congregations. And ultimately, that conflict between congregations and their pastors will be reduced.

Centre for Public Dialogue and Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee

It has been an eventful quarter for us! [Journey with Me](#), the refugee workshop and online toolkit that we have been developing with various other agencies, launched in both Vancouver and Toronto. At the Toronto launch, we had the honour of hearing from Mary Jo Leddy, founder of Romero House, a refugee welcome house in Toronto. As boatloads of refugees drown in the Mediterranean on an increasingly regular basis, this workshop is unfortunately even more timely than anticipated. Two classes (Hamilton and Toronto) submitted letters urging action to sponsor Middle Eastern refugees. In response, we worked with our partners at Diaconal Ministries and World Renew to write two advocacy letters to the federal government about refugee sponsorship.

Dialogue—two-way communication—is important to us in every area of our work. It's in our name! This quarter, we have partnered closely with the Justice and Faith project as they promote dialogue about the intersections of justice and faith in the CRC through a dramatic presentation called *Just Faith?*. Through the Milestones project, we have been asking people to share stories of “milestone moments” on the road to reconciliation during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the reForming Relationships art tour, both of which are drawing to a close. The response has been outstanding! It has been encouraging to hear of the ways that the Spirit has been at work. Praise God! You can view the compiled stories at crcna.org/milestones.

During this quarter, we also created and promoted worship resources for Reconciliation Sunday, a special Sunday this year to mark the end of the TRC. We are working on election resources on our key issues, with the Reformed Church in America and World Renew.

Discipleship and Faith Formation Ministries

When I was a pre-teen, I asked my Uncle Jack (now retired CRC pastor Jack Hielema) what he liked to preach about. He gave a one word answer: “grace.”

“Doesn't that get boring?” I asked.

He smiled and replied, “No, it doesn't, and besides, people need to hear it over and over again.”

I accepted his answer, but didn't really understand it. I think I do now.

We at Faith Formation Ministries are a small team that is being officially launched as a denominational ministry at synod in June. We've spent some months sorting out our calling and identity, and have concluded that a fitting tagline for our work is “Encouraging discipleship shaped by grace.”

It's my observation that we Reformed types often struggle with the connection between discipleship and grace. The catechism takes us in a strong direction, asserting that our response to grace flows from gratitude which works itself out in a life of discipleship. Amen!

But I wonder if that goes far enough.

The New Testament calls for transformed communities that are embodiments of grace. Paul begins epistle after epistle thanking the Lord for the presence of love, faith, hope, spiritual gifts and other signs of grace that are embodied in specific communities. One can smell grace; communities that are shaped by grace become the aroma of Jesus, a sacrificial offering with a pleasing fragrance.

Discipleship divorced from grace is nothing more than cold legalism. Discipleship shaped by grace is compellingly attractive, winsome, magnetic. We at Faith Formation Ministries have a passion to see children, teens, young adults (and all believers!) catch the power of the gospel as they are enfolded within grace-shaped communities.

What contributes to the smell of a grace-shaped community?

Here are some highlights that I have experienced:

An elder who had prepared several teenagers for profession of faith, invited them to share their testimonies with the consistory. When they were done, he turned to his fellow elders and said, "Now it's your turn. Share your testimonies with them." After a moment of surprised awkwardness, they all did, and the smell of believers in different stages of life sharing the joys and struggles of their God-stories filled the room.

After the youth praise team introduced a song that a few worshipers found difficult to sing, one older member said to a singer, "It was difficult for me to worship through that song, but simply seeing the joy on your face as you led us was all that I needed," and the smell of sacrificial community-building lingered in the sanctuary.

A pastor called on a member who had been continually obstructive, making critical comments about every initiative at congregational meetings and other places, and told him, "Your negativity needs to stop. Your words do not contribute to the coming of the kingdom; they simply sow dissension." The man stopped, and the smell of heeded admonishment that frees leaders to lead well was strengthened.

I could go on, but you get the idea: grace desires to permeate every dimension of our life together as congregations of Jesus, and as it does, its permeating, yeast-like power grows disciples.

And it's our privilege at FFM to be encouragers of that power.

Race Relations

The Race Team is working to share the vision for diversity and equity with congregational and classis leaders as a work central to their ministry. They are committed to helping leaders understand and navigate the diverse ethnic cultures in their communities. The team has learned that to grow credibility among diverse ethnic groups, church leaders need to develop solidarity with the struggles that each group faces as they work to integrate into a broader community.

The work of Race Relations is the work of everyone in our denomination. Michelle R. Loyd-Paige is a Calvin

professor with a deep passion and conviction for the work of Race Relations. In this report, we include a [link](#) to excerpts from a collaborative work on "African Americans: We've Come This Far by Faith." [<http://www.crcna.org/news/african-americans-weve-come-far-faith>]

Dominican Republic Training: Esteban Lugo and Viviana Cornejo traveled to the Dominican Republic to provide Cultural Competence and Facilitation Training to over 40 participants. Among the participants were 17 leaders who were provided facilitator training the day after their Cultural Competence training. By providing training to leaders, the work of Race Relations is being carried on all over the world as we train leaders who will continue the work in their community.

Collaboration: The need to work for diversity and equity collaboratively with the leadership in our denomination is evident. Each member of our team is working with key leaders in other agencies. World Renew, World Missions and Home Missions leaders are working collaboratively with Race Relations staff on events and training to bring alignment, awareness and advocacy in the work of equity and diversity.

Calvin College

Spring at Calvin College is a time to reflect on the academic year, and to express thanks to God and to his people who have blessed the college with their presence. During its May meetings, the Board of Trustees thanked eight members who are leaving the board—Randall Engle, Bill Katt, Dan Meester, Ruth Palma, Scott Spoelhof, David Van Randwyk, Larry Vandergrift, and Dale Venhuizen—for their diligent work on the board and service to Calvin College and its mission. Two weeks later, the college celebrated the accomplishments of the graduating class of 2015, sending them on their way to do God's work in God's world.

Good progress is being made on the efforts to put the college on a [sustainable financial footing](#). In April, the college made a \$13 million principal payment on the long-term debt, with a total paid of over \$26 million in principal since the financial issues first surfaced. The college is well on its way to meeting its financial

targets on debt levels and debt service.

[<http://www.calvin.edu/admin/president/finances/>]

Projected enrollment for 2015-16 will be comparable to last year, with record high numbers of AHANA (North American minority) and international students. New students from traditional populations of regional Christian schools, the CRC, and alumni children continue to follow the demographic trend of a slight decline, and Enrollment Management is implementing new admissions counseling initiatives in recognition of current enrollment challenges and future projections.

Calvin's May 23 graduation day was beautiful, particularly so for the almost 900 students who finally completed work on their Calvin degrees. Join us in praying for the new graduates, as well as those who are planning to come to Calvin, and those students who are not yet sure about their plans. Calvin remains a faithful steward of its calling in Christian higher education, but we need help from alumni and friends to help keep Calvin in demand. Calvin's heart and mind education is a remarkable gift to communities of faith around the world.

Calvin Theological Seminary

On May 23, we were blessed to witness the graduation of 106 students. We had three "firsts": 36 Spanish-speaking students graduated with the first ever Certificate in Hispanic Ministry; we awarded M.Div. degrees to the first 2 distance students; and it was the first time we awarded 7 Ph.D. degrees at one time!

The Certificate of Hispanic Ministry program is directed by Prof. Mariano Avila, and entails nine different Seminary-credit courses over three years. Almost all of these students are pastors and many of them are bi-vocational. We have already begun a second cohort of 40 students in this certificate program.

Calvin Seminary was pleased to present the 2015 Distinguished Alumni award at our Commencement ceremony to the Reverend Dr. Dale J. Cooper (who primarily ministered as Calvin College Chaplain) and Reverend Henry R. De Bolster (first

president of Redeemer University College).

4th Annual Presidents Legacy Society Gathering: In mid-May, a luncheon was held for over 125 participants celebrating the Center for Excellence in Preaching: Past, Present and Future, in honor of their 10th anniversary this year, with a special conversation provided by panelists Scott Hoezee and Neal Plantinga and facilitated by John Witvliet.

New faculty appointments: Pending a successful interview before Synod, the following candidates were appointed: Dr. Matt Tuininga – Assistant Professor of Moral Theology (to begin July 1, 2016) and Mr. Corey Willson – Assistant Professor of Missiology (to begin July 1, 2015).

In May, the Board read letters of intent to retire from the following faculty members: Dr. Arie Leder (July 31, 2016), Dr. John Cooper (June 30, 2017) and Dr. John Bolt (December 31, 2017). The Board expressed appreciation for the faithful ministry of these faculty members.

On July 8, high school students completing their junior or senior years will begin the 3-week Facing Your Future program. Combining study and hands-on ministry experiences, this is the 17th year of this formative experience in ministry. Thank you for praying for this opportunity and the other programs of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is committed to proclaiming the gospel, discipling believers, and strengthening the church throughout the world.

Changes create opportunity for our Chinese ministry. As Rev. Jimmy Lin retires in June, Pastor Jerry An assumes leadership of the Chinese ministry. An has built strong partnerships with media organizations throughout North America and China – helping to develop the new Chinese mobile application, *Be Thou My Rhythm* (released in full, spring 2015). The Chinese *Today* is moving to a paperless format. Within a culture that is increasingly mobile, the devotional is now available on multiple platforms,

expanding its readership by hundreds of thousands.

The Spanish ministry celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. As we reflect on God's faithfulness to the ministry over the years, we pray for new and growing Spanish programs. *Las Aventuras de Elisardo*, the children's outreach radio program, launched in 2014 and is being broadcast on more than 100 stations throughout Latin America. *Cada Dia*, a devotional booklet and online resource, is showing high demand in Cuba. We are exploring the opportunity to distribute the devotional. The Spanish team leader is also in communications with CRWM to organize a COICOM event in Cuba.

ReFrame Media, the English ministry of BTGMI, is improving its reach significantly. The number of readers influenced by *Today* has grown since implementing the specialized Lenten theme this past spring. That number is expected to continue to increase with the upcoming Advent series as well. The Prayer Team has also grown substantially via email subscriptions as a way for our fans to get involved in the ministry.

BTGMI continues to thank God for faithful prayer and financial support through ministry shares and gifts from churches and individuals that help us reach that goal.

Home Missions

"Be my witnesses." These three words from Acts 1:8 sum up what we, the church, are called to be and do until Jesus comes back: to lead by example in our families, churches, workplaces, and anywhere else we serve. At Home Missions, we're committed to answering that call. Together with you, we're working to start and strengthen missional churches that bring new life – that bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel. We give thanks for the many ways God is on the move in North America:

In Spring, Texas, Pablo and Diana Gaggero pastor La Casa de Oración. The church's name means "House of Prayer," which is a testimony to the trust in the faithfulness of God that the Gaggeros seek to bring to their community. The heart of this ministry lies in the prayer groups that happen all week long in members' homes. God

proves his faithfulness over and over again in answering their prayers – please join them in praying that God will provide their own church facility.

In Waterloo, Ontario, campus minister Brian Bork leads ministries that serve both Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Waterloo. "Stress is off the charts at these schools," says Bork, who seeks to help students strike a work and life balance. Through gatherings for students, faculty, and others, Bork offers faith and community. Praise God for lives transformed!

Home Missions' regional teams like the one in the Great Lakes region serve congregations and classes across the denomination. Recently the Great Lakes team came alongside the pastors and outreach teams of five Michigan congregations and helped them imagine and develop new ways to connect to their neighborhoods. Through experiments like prayer walks, community events, and more, the participating churches learned much about connecting with their communities – please pray that God will continue to bless these churches and ignite a passion for outreach in many others.

World Missions

For several CRWM missionaries and staff, summer serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness and the faithfulness of the Christian Reformed Church.

CRWM has seen God working faithfully by preparing new hearts for service. At the end of May, several CRWM volunteers were commissioned for their future service throughout God's global Kingdom.

For CRWM teachers who serve in international schools, graduation and summer reminds them how God has been at work over the last school year. It also reminds them how God will work in new ways through graduating students—students whom God has called to be pastors, missionaries, or other servants in his Kingdom.

A missionary serving at LCC University in Lithuania summed up her experience well, "After a school year of sharing all that life can bring, we feel like we have become part of a great extended family. God's family is vast and full of amazing stories; it has been our privilege to share in so many here."

Many of these teachers and other missionaries spend summer months back in North America for a time of home service. Here, they are reminded of God's faithfulness through those who support their ministry—many of whom are members of the Christian Reformed Church. The missionaries see how God has placed it on the hearts of the church to pray for and support their ministry with financial gifts.

CRWM has seen God working faithfully in the midst of a tragedy. When Nepal was rocked by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake at the end of April, God protected all CRWM staff in the area. He also began using them almost immediately to be the hands and feet of relief work in Nepal. The connections that these missionaries have made over the years, combined with responses from World Renew and special gifts from donors, allowed for God's love to be revealed.

Praise God for reminders of His faithfulness this summer and in the time to come.

World Renew

Ms. Carol Bremer-Bennett was approved by the Joint Ministry Council of World Renew to the office of director for its operations in the United States. She has an undergrad degree from Calvin College and a graduate degree from Western New Mexico University. Carol joins Ida Kaastra Mutoigo, who has overseen the organization's Canadian office since 2006. Carol's experience includes more than 20 years of organizational leadership in a variety of teacher, principal, superintendent and director positions in the Rehoboth, New Mexico private school system.

Mr. Ken Kim accepted the offer to serve as the leader of the Disaster Response Team, beginning April 1. Mr. Kim comes with nine years of leadership experience as director for the Presbyterian World Service and Development, and 11 years working as a mission worker, mostly in Guatemala. He has also undertaken numerous international consultancy assignments.

The Nepal earthquakes have affected moms, dads and children; homes have been damaged or destroyed; stores, government service buildings and

other structures are gone. In such an incredibly short time, visual and emotional landscapes are gone. World Renew moved into action immediately for Christ's sake, and began to offer all the necessities for over 1900 families in the form of food and tarps. We will provide additional supplies including tents, more tarps, blankets, hygiene kits, water filters and more food assistance for 1300 families.

Assembly of Global Partners: From May 5 - 9, most of the staff of World Renew was involved with the AGP in Muskegon, MI. During that time there was learning, teaching and input into the 2015-2018 World Renew Strategic Plan. About 250 people joined the assembly from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and North America. It was an amazing opportunity to get a world-wide perspective on where World Renew can go in the next years.

Partners Worldwide

This year, God has used Partners Worldwide to equip and mobilize thousands of businesspeople and entrepreneurs around the world so that all may have life and have it abundantly. To God be the glory!

Partners Worldwide mobilizes long-term, hands on global relationships to form a powerful Christian network that uses business as the way to create flourishing economic environments in all parts of the world. We create partnerships with local community institutions to provide mentoring, training, access to capital and advocacy. This builds up permanent local capacity designed to catalyze entrepreneurs and job creators and to celebrate business as a calling to do God's work.

We are excited to see our unique partnership model expanding throughout the United States as more and more people understand the importance of creating flourishing economic environments in urban communities and cities where we have high levels of unemployment and poverty in the U.S. We recently held a North American Partnership Summit which brought together approximately 30 leaders from our local partners throughout the United States to share best practices and lessons learned on what is needed to help lift more individuals, families and communities

out of poverty through business growth and job creation.

We are seeing the impact of our unique partnership model around the world: Over 56,000 businesses in 25 countries are using their business as their ministry—impacting the marketplace, creating jobs and transforming lives. These businesses created and sustained over 90,000 jobs, making a direct impact on the lives of well over 250,000 people.

Thank you for your involvement, support and prayers for the work of Partners Worldwide. We look forward to partnering with more CRC businesspeople and churches to continue creating jobs and transforming lives around the globe!

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Cadets

If you've been reading these reports and wondering when Dick Broene retires as Cadet director and Steve Bootsma takes over, you're not alone. They are both wondering the same thing, and it's in the hands of the U.S. government. In the meantime, Broene is still in the position — at least, at the time of this writing — and Bootsma is still awaiting permission to come work in the United States.

Despite that, things go on. Plans are falling into place for the next international camporee, planned for 2017. A site in the Black Hills of South Dakota has been approved, and boys and men are already looking forward to it in great anticipation. After that, a Michigan group is planning the 2020 camporee. They are even looking into the state's Upper Peninsula for a camporee site.

The Cadet counselors' convention will take place next month, Lord willing, in London, Ontario. Please pray with us for a God-glorifying experience and a time of spiritual growth for counselors and their families as they gather for training, inspiration, and fellowship.

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior (GEMS) is experiencing growth across North America and around the world. We currently have 24,000 girls and 5,300 women actively engaged in our 942 clubs. At GEMS we believe every girl needs to know Jesus Christ. Our

theme for the 2015-16 season is "Choose Truth". Using Psalm 119:105 as our theme verse, we are actively equipping girls to choose God's truth in a world that is perpetually giving them false messages.

Our *SHINE brightly* and *Sparkle* magazines are another outreach of our ministry perfect for the young girls in your life. Each issue focuses on how to grow her relationship with Jesus and how to live a Christ-centered life in a secular world, all while strengthening her walk with God.

This July we'll be hosting our 46th Leadership Conference at Messiah College in Harrisburg, PA. This event is full of focused workshops and teaching designed to cultivate strong leaders. Equipping women to mentor well is essential for guiding the next generation.

At the conference, women develop their leadership skills but also have opportunities to interact and share as they discuss successes and brainstorm through challenges in their clubs. Many women have testified that this annual event has transformed their walk with Jesus and has helped them become missionaries in their own backyards.

We are excited with what international doors God has opened for us to train women and start GEMS Girls' Clubs in over 11 countries outside of the United States and Canada. Jesus is a name that fits in any culture or language!

We are honored to partner with the Christian Reformed Church as we, together, equip girls to live radically, faithful lives in service to the King. Thank you for continuing to support the ministry with your prayers.

Youth Unlimited

This summer, 155 CRC congregations are sending 1,800 students on a Youth Unlimited *Serve* or *Live It* experience, and we are excited and thankful to be serving the CRC in this way! New this summer is an intentional effort to be more flexible in trying to assist churches by customizing a *Serve* experience for those needing a shorter experience and to broaden the age group to include younger and older participants. We look forward to continuing to better meet the needs of more churches next summer as well. (To read stories and testimonies and see pictures, be sure to check out our

blog, and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.)

The speakers and devotional material at each of our summer experiences will be focusing on the theme, "The Other 51" based on John 20:21-22 which says, "*again Jesus said, "peace be with you! As the father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit..."*" We are praying God uses this scripture and theme to help students understand that their week at *Serve* or *Live It* is not about 1 week but about taking what God said and did with them during that week and applying it to the other 51 weeks of the year.

As you begin making plans to kick off the new ministry year this fall, we are here for you! We sum up our ministry with the words students, churches and faith-forming experiences, and we would welcome the opportunity to assist you in any way we can. So, whether you are in Canada or America or from somewhere between the east coast and west coast, we are here for you.