

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

SEPTEMBER 2009



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

In This Issue

Director of Denominational Ministries

Congregational Support

Disability Concerns

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Pastor-Church Relations

Safe Church Ministry

Service Link

Race Relations

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

Diaconal Ministries

CRWRC

Educational Institutions

Calvin College

Calvin Theological Seminary

Mission Organizations

Back to God Ministries International

Home Missions

World Missions

Partners in Ministry

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Partners Worldwide

From the Director of Denominational Ministries

Effective partnerships between ministries and congregations will enable the CRC to stretch and leverage God's resources and to affect greater impact in ministry than is possible when acting independently. We, the CRC, felt so strongly about the impact of partnering that we identified it in the ministry plan as one of our ten focus objectives. Since 2006, when the ministry plan was written, partnerships have continued to grow in number and in depth as we have continued to leverage and stretch our resources. As you embark on the Fall ministry season, may you truly sense in these reports our desire to partner with you as we transform lives and communities worldwide!

Chaplaincy Ministries

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries commits most of its energy and resources to partnering for impact. Partnerships include the following:

- **Local CRCs** – Connecting chaplains with their local congregations using the Covenant of Joint Supervision as directed by decision of Synod 1998. Because chaplains usually work apart from their local church, the most important partnership is between the chaplain and his or her calling church.
- **Educational institutions** – Working through CRC associated colleges as well as with Calvin Seminary to encourage young people to consider the call to chaplaincy.
- **Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action** – Collaborating on a variety of projects including the Committee to Study War and Peace, the Committee to Study Restorative Justice, and on selective conscientious objection.
- **Disability Concerns** – Attending a fall conference together to begin work on reducing stigma and increasing welcome for people with mental illness in CRCs.
- **Home Missions** – Planting a church in a Michigan prison with several CRC congregations and the Michigan Office of Corrections.
- **Calvin Institute of Christian Worship** – Creating online worship and caring resources for persons with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. For more information, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/worship/>.
- **National Chaplaincy Organizations** – Working closely with such organizations as the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, and the Association of Professional Chaplains.

Disability Concerns

From its beginning, Disability Concerns has partnered with Christian Reformed churches and classes to help them grow in including people with disabilities in their lives and ministries.

Some 550 Regional and church disability advocates connect Christian Reformed churches with local and regional resources, working interactively with churches both to discern needs and to provide resources through Disability Concerns' volunteers, website, quarterly newsletter *Breaking Barriers*, consultations with individual churches, and more.

A staff person in each CRC agency and educational institution serves as an agency disability advocate by encouraging awareness of, ministry with, and hiring of people with disabilities.

This Fall several people from Disability Concerns and Chaplaincy will attend a conference together to begin work on reducing stigma and increasing welcome for people with mental illness in CRCs.

An annual conference in Michigan begun by Disabilities Concerns has led to partnerships with a number of organizations including Friendship Ministries, CLC Network, the Gray Center, Hope Network, Western Theological Seminary, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Disability Concerns is also involved with a variety of other conferences and Days of Encouragement across North America.

Last year Disability Concerns entered into a formal agreement with the RCA to work together on disability and inclusion.

Disability Concerns maintains close ties to other organizations including Pathways to Promise and the National Council of Churches Committee on Disabilities.

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Ministry partnership creates strong "win-wins," providing Faith Alive and its partners the ability to multiply the impact it would have if it worked alone. Our partners are "kindred spirits" in belief and doctrine, yet they provide fresh ideas and content and open the door to new audiences Faith Alive could not provide or reach on its own. Our partnerships with the Reformed Church in America, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Dynamic Youth Ministries, Friendship Ministries, and the Presbyterian Church USA, among others, are strong and continue to shape and expand our products and ministry impact. More than half of Faith Alive resources are distributed to non-CRC churches annually. Small group discipleship resources, songbooks, and curriculum for people with disabilities are the result of partnering with ministries for kingdom impact.

Faith Alive Marketing is exploring new ways to use its e-commerce website for ministry. This includes offering online samples, collecting reviews, posting free downloads, and hosting videos online. In addition, we are exploring social networking channels such as Facebook and Twitter as ways to encourage collaboration.

The Banner is beginning to work on upgrading its Web presence at www.thebanner.org. We hope to benefit soon from greater participation by readers, particularly in posting CRC news that escapes our reporters' notice and expanding our capacity to review books, movies, and music in our online Tuned-In section. We hope to update

the print version of *The Banner* after a comprehensive marketing survey scheduled for fall.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

With only three staff people and an intern at the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJHA), doing serious advocacy requires *lots* of partnering! In addition to long-term relationships with Washington DC institutes such as Bread for the World and Sojourners, OSJHA is busy making connections closer to home as well.

OSJHA has been actively engaged with the 2006 synodical report on peace and justice. Production is underway on a series of educational videos on peace-building for which our communications staff has interviewed CRWRC field staff, former director of Chaplaincy Ministries Herm Keizer, and others deeply engaged with the issue. In response to Middle East conflict, OSJHA partnered with the Reformed Church in America to produce the educational resource *Cradle of Our Faith*, and is gearing up for a series of joint learning trips in 2010.

OSJHA and CRWRC are involved in an ongoing but revitalized project to capture and promote some of the more fantastically successful stories of advocacy in the CRC. Two new articles are underway.

OSJHA has made some surprising partnerships over the last few months via Twitter. Because of the "real-time" nature of its communication, Twitter is ideal for keeping an ear to the ground when it comes to new resources, advocacy opportunities, and connecting with other non-government organizations dealing with justice issues. Learn something new at www.twitter.com/crcjustice.

Pastor-Church Relations

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations has a long history of partnering with classes in the work of classical church visitors. Church visitors are seasoned pastors and elders who, periodically, visit councils of churches within their classis for the purpose of encouragement and support. Frequently, church visitors and Pastor-Church Relations partner to assist congregations that are experiencing a season of difficulty or the struggle of a challenging transition. Also, best practices in church visitation are being noted. These effective practices are then being shared with other classes and are becoming the basis upon which Pastor-Church Relations has begun to offer training for church visitors to help strengthen this vital connection between the classes and their local congregations.

Safe Church Ministry

Abuse Preven....we've got a new name! In June synod changed the name of The Office of Abuse Prevention to Safe Church Ministry. The new name emphasizes

partnership with local churches to create safe adult and youth programs while strengthening ministry to victims and offenders of abuse and their family members.

On Sunday, September 27, Christian Reformed Churches are invited to acknowledge the presence of abuse in our communities. Free bulletin inserts have been prepared to create awareness of elder abuse and awareness of the steps of justice-seeking for those impacted by abuse. Visit the Safe Church Ministry web site (www.crcna.org/safechurch) to order the inserts and find other worship resources.

In October Safe Church Ministry will sponsor the second Safe Church Team Chairpersons' conference. This year, the conference will focus on restorative justice and the implications of using restorative justice practices when allegations of abuse arise.

Classis Safe Church Teams are a wonderful resource for their local churches. Safe Church Teams can offer education to the local congregation. Some teams have web sites with helpful information and community resources. We welcome Classis Central Plains as the newest Classis Safe Church Team.

What might the staff of a Christian school and volunteers of a church youth program have in common? Children and teens that bully or are bullied. Safe Church Ministry is exploring ways to partner with both communities to develop anti-bullying strategies and to teach healthy interactions between youth.

Service Link

The summer of 2009 saw the ServiceLink Volunteer program, which originated in Canada in 1995, transition into a bi-national program and begin serving the denomination across North America. Empowered by God's grace and love, members of all CRC congregations will have the opportunity to join agency and ministry staff in one common mission—voluntarily offering time, talent, and treasure for meaningful involvement in ministry both at home and abroad. Together they will partner for greater impact in ministry and enable the Christian Reformed Church to stretch further in its mission to transform lives and communities worldwide.

The purpose of the ServiceLink program is to serve the members of the CRC and other Christians by providing them with a one-stop place for information and resources that are made available through offices in both Canada and the United States. ServiceLink staff will partner with agency and ministry staff to gather and promote a variety of diverse opportunities and collaboratively facilitate meaningful involvement for volunteers. Mission and service experiences will provide them with first hand glimpses of what God is doing through the efforts of the Christian Reformed Church and so generate enthusiasm for a deeper commitment to its mission and vision.

Race Relations

Realizing the greater impact of ministry through partnerships, the Office of Race Relations (ORR) continues to develop effective ministry partnerships with several of the denominational agencies, including more collaboration with the Specialized Ministries of the CRCNA.

In spring 2009, Race Relations traveled to Nicaragua to conduct a contextualized Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) workshop involving forty-five World Missions and CRWRC missionaries and their families.

In April, the ORR met with various CRC pastors to promote the work of antiracism and racial reconciliation in Washington State and British Columbia. Plans are underway to conduct DORR and Widening the Circle (WTC) workshops there this fall.

At the Multiethnic Conference (MEC), the ORR partnered with Back to God Ministries International to present a new resource, Spotlight, to MEC participants. In addition, the Form of Subscription (FOS) committee solicited feedback from MEC conferees on the FOS.

The ORR continues its involvement with the Arab-American Friendship Center in Dearborn, Michigan. In an effort to raise awareness, the ORR has visited the center twice with various CRC leaders. Our hosts, Bassem and Wafa Qusous, provided a tour not only of the center but also of the key sites of Arab activity. In June Dr. and Mrs. Qusous presented both a plenary session and a workshop at the MEC on how to effectively minister among Arabs and Muslims.

Development continues on a DVD on racial reconciliation in partnership with Home Missions and Faith Alive. It is intended that this DVD be distributed among all the CRC congregations.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

When the implementation plan was written for the Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) program in 2007, one of the desired outcomes noted was that there would be "new and renewed partnerships between congregations and CRCNA ministries that enhance health and ministry." As the second year of programming has just been completed, it can be said that much progress is being made.

Each year pastors and congregational ministry leaders gather together at regional SCE learning events. This past year each event had a local Home Missions (HM) regional leader speak on healthy congregations and a Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) faculty person give a presentation on spiritual dangers in ministry. Through partnering with HM and CTS, the SCE events had a greater impact on the attendees.

SCE has been working with the Reformed Church of America (RCA) in the training of SCE coaches. Discussions have been held between SCE and the RCA

as to how we can continue to work together. This partnership has benefited both the CRC and the RCA.

Under the SCE program, smaller congregations (150 adult professing members or less) are able to apply for three different grants: Health & Renewal (HR), Technology & Equipment (TE), and Coaching. While no financial contributions are required for HR and TE grants, the majority of requests are submitted with in-kind funds noted—in some cases the congregation contributes more than they are requesting. This financial partnership results in the ability to stretch resources and enable more congregations to receive funds.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) has been working with a variety of people in the writing of training tools that are valuable resources for pastors and congregations. Currently, SPE is partnering with the Office of Pastor Church Relations on a new training tool which will explore the evaluation of pastors and church staff. This publication will be available early in 2010.

Every summer, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) offers a week-long course titled The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry. SPE has been partnering with CTS on this for the past seven years. Pastors, seminarians, and lay persons have benefited from the CTS faculty who teach it, the other students in the class, and the material studied. As participants return to their ministry settings, their new knowledge impacts others.

SPE and CTS are just beginning a new project together. The plan is to create a DVD to train leaders of Leadership Development Networks—training networks for pastors who don't take the seminary route into ministry—to interpret Scripture well in their teaching, leading, and preaching. CTS has been in conversation with Home Missions concerning this project. The partnership between the three groups will benefit many.

Once a year, SPE holds a learning event for pastor couples. This time of refreshment and encouragement is enhanced by participation of staff from Pastor-Church Relations and their presentation on being healthy in the pastorate/parsonage, which is greatly appreciated by the attendees.

CRWRC

As CRWRC seeks to live justice and love mercy, we look to Christian Reformed Church (CRC) congregations for prayers, gifts, and volunteers.

CRWRC Disaster Response Services teams from Chicago-area Orland Park Church built a six-bedroom, three-bathroom house for a sixteen-member extended family that lost their home to Hurricane Katrina. Munster CRC is providing accommodations to volunteer work teams rebuilding flooded homes in northwest Indiana this summer.

As of June 2009, direct support from CRC churches funded CRWRC *EmbraceAIDS* proposals in Bangladesh,

India, Indonesia, Philippines, Kenya, Tanzania, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Honduras, and Dominican Republic. With CRWRC support, communities in these fields are developing resources to care for widows, orphans, and the sick while stemming the spread of HIV.

Support from CRC congregations enables ongoing programs like the CRWRC-supported cereal banks in Niger, which store grain for purchase off-season when it is otherwise too expensive to buy. CRWRC staff work with local farmers who oversee the cereal banks and have shared techniques that have doubled the harvest for some.

A huge wave of support from CRC congregations contributed significant funds for CRWRC's largest relief response ever completed: Banda Aceh, Indonesia—an area devastated by December 2004's tsunami. CRWRC provided temporary shelter for 642 households, medical camps, electrical power to eighteen villages, school access for 2,300 children, wells in fifteen villages, income assistance to 17,500 people, and 1,100 permanent homes. Bandah Aceh governor, Irwandi Yusuf, remarked, "Through CRWRC's exemplary programming, the people of Aceh have risen from their sorrow."

Calvin College

Calvin's Church Relations planning team is focused on further enhancing relationships between the college and CRC congregations. The Church Relations strategic plan includes cross-divisional and denominational cooperation and coordination with campus offices, centers and departments that directly relate to churches. Members of our team have been visiting churches to listen and learn about the needs and resources of our partners in congregational ministry. This active listening has already helped us launch new initiatives to maximize meaningful contact with churches through available resources such as faith formation, youth initiatives, service projects, ministry partnerships, and speakers and programs.

Calvin's new Chaplain, Dr. Mary Hulst, began her work on June 1, 2009. Dr. Hulst has reorganized the staff under the name "Campus Ministries," with a dynamic team of associate chaplains and mentors who work diligently to meet the worship and spiritual needs on campus for our faculty, staff, and students. See <http://www.calvin.edu/faith/> for more information.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW) welcomes former chaplain, Dale Cooper, to their staff. He is on the road to preach, meet with, and evaluate the summer church internships of Calvin's Jubilee Fellows, and to listen and learn in these visits about how Calvin can serve congregations better.

Dale has a wonderful list of talks and workshops that he is willing to present in adult education programs, seniors fellowship meetings, Christian high school chapels, or for teacher in-service on topics like "Passing the Faith on to the Next Generation." For information on the resources and programs the Calvin Institute of

Christian Worship has to offer, see:
www.calvin.edu/worship.

The College also welcomes senior groups from the Midwest or Southern Ontario to visit the campus for a tour, program, and lunch; and has hosted CRC Classes meetings at Calvin's Prince Conference Center. These endeavors have enriched our relationships with many congregations.

If you are interested in further information about Calvin resources for your church, if you would like Dale Cooper to preach in your church, or if you would like a visit to your region, please contact Carol Reinstra at crienstr@calvin.edu or by phone at (616)526-6175, or Darlene Meyering at meyrda@calvin.edu or by phone at (616-526-6800).

Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) is pleased to partner with other CRC agencies and institutions. Many of our partnerships revolve around training students for ministry. We are grateful for World Missions, Home Missions, Back to God Ministries and CRWRC, all of whom help place our students in cross-cultural or congregational internship experiences. We are very excited about a new venture with Calvin College in which seminary students will serve as dormitory spiritual advisors. We are also pleased with our ongoing relationship with Borderplex—a cluster of CRC ministries in the El Paso, Texas, Juarez, Mexico area.

CTS also partners with other CRC ministries in continuing education for pastors and other ministry leaders, including joint programming with the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship and close consultation with Leadership Development Networks. CTS has recently added a group of new certificate programs for church staff and ministry associates. These certificates are not as intensive as a full degree but offer foundations for ministry in a number of specialized areas.

Perhaps our most exciting partnership these days is through the Timothy Institute. Created by four CTS professors, the Timothy Institute has grown to minister in over 30 countries around the world, and trains pastors and ministry leaders who have virtually no theological education. Today CTS, World Missions, CRWRC and Back To God Ministries International are all partners of Timothy Institute as it continues to grow in impact with its emphasis upon training indigenous leaders rather than sending western missionaries.

CTS is grateful for the ways that ministry partnerships enhance all the ministries that partner and bring glory to God!

Back to God Ministries International

When Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) considered ministry in India in the Hindi language, a key question that needed answering was this: Are there partners with which we can link to make ministry happen?

The answer was yes. In the coming year, BTGMI will be working with Good Books Educational Trust (an Indian media ministry) and with Words of Hope (the media ministry of the Reformed Church of America) to develop new media projects that reach northern India with the gospel.

Partnership is a key ministry strategy for BTGMI. Each of our international language ministries is linked with local churches and denominations to power ministry forward.

A few examples follow:

- **Brazil** – The Presbyterian Church of Brazil is joining with us in building a new ministry center that will boost distribution of Christian media throughout Latin America.
- **Russia and Japan** – BTGMI works in close partnership with Christian Reformed World Mission efforts.
- **Haiti** – A new discipleship center has opened in Port au Prince that is shared by Christian Reformed World Missions and BTGMI.
- **Indonesia** – A joint partnership with World Missions, CRWRC, and Timothy Leadership Institute is bringing training to lay leaders in rural communities.
- **The Middle East** – Arabic media work is conducted in partnership with MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship) and Words of Hope.

BTGMI is now working to bring our partnerships to the congregational level here in North America. A new English language ministry titled "Church Juice" will help congregations strengthen their own media/web presence in their communities. For more information about how this new ministry can assist your congregation, contact Jerod Clark at jclark@crcna.org.

Home Missions

Partnering is at the very heart of Christian Reformed Home Missions. We participate in God's redemptive mission in the world by working to catalyze and cultivate gospel movements across North America through specific partnerships with leaders, churches, ministries, classes, and other CRC agencies. These partnerships, facilitated through our regional teams, help develop missional leaders, multiply new churches and campus ministries, and encourage churches for renewal.

We help form local partnerships with CRC classes throughout Canada and the United States to start new churches and campus ministries and to discover and train emerging leaders. As part of our focus on developing diverse missional leaders, we also help promote and resource clusters of leaders in geographical contexts.

As new churches form and existing congregations start mission plans, they need to conduct opportunity scans of their local communities. Working with CRWRC and Diaconal Ministries (in Canada), we help new and continuing churches engage in the process of finding assets and opportunities for partnerships in their unique ministry contexts.

We partner with churches and ministries that seek to grow in their ability to effectively proclaim the gospel, so lives and neighborhoods are transformed through the Spirit's power. We work with other agencies and the Network for Congregations to suggest coaching and to provide just-in-time training and processes to help churches and ministries find their place in God's mission.

World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions and Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada have signed a formal agreement to build a working relationship. Under the agreement, Wycliffe Canada personnel who are members of the CRC will be officially recognized as partner missionaries with CRWM. "It's very exciting to see denominations like the CRC, and its missionary arm, the CRWM, engaging in the worldwide Bible translation movement in a more significant way," said WBTC director Dave Ohlson. "Working together in this way can only enhance the building of God's Kingdom, especially among some of the world's most marginalized peoples in countries where both agencies work." This partnership is a recent example of a long-term strategy of partnership around the world.

As the world's needs become more complex and the means to reach out become more available, CRWM has been finding other organizations with which to stretch and leverage God's resources and to partner for greater impact.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

GEMS Girls' Clubs focus on partnering with churches to share and show the love of Jesus and train women and girls to passionately follow Christ.

Currently, GEMS has 560 partnerships with CRC congregations. Through these partnerships, women serving as leaders in their church's club are provided with multiple, annual training opportunities to help them become the most effective mentors they can be. Furthermore, girls are inspired to walk closely with Christ and to know, understand, and follow God's Word through excellent resources written from a reformed perspective, comprehensive training, and encouragement. Extensive opportunities for service to the church family, to the community, and to the larger, global family of God are also provided.

Additional ministry partnerships enjoyed by GEMS Girls' Clubs include Every Orphan's Hope, Christian Service Brigade, Stonecroft Ministries, Zondervan Publishing, Hearts-in-Step Christian Dance Academy, and Unity Music Ministries.

Calvinist Cadet Corps partners with congregations throughout the denomination to take on the challenge of raising generations of boys to become Christ-like adults with the help of proven ministries, curricula, and structures. Men receive training to be effective leaders

and coaching to build relationships with the boys. Cadets grow up to become counselors, deacons, elders, teachers, pastors, and more, filling important roles in the kingdom of God. It is rewarding to hear the testimonies of adults who say that God used a Cadet counselor to influence their lives for Him. Truly, the Cadet ministry and the congregations are partners for impact in the kingdom of God.

Youth Unlimited (YU) values ministry partnerships and recognizes their many benefits. Churches that host YU SERVE mission experiences and their local communities are blessed as Jesus Christ is revealed to them through service and kindness. SERVE participants are blessed through serving Christ in ways that they would not experience in the daily routine of life and become extensions of the host church, enabling it to fulfill God's call to be his hands and feet to the local community. YU is blessed in the ability to offer life changing experiences to young people and their leaders throughout North America and beyond.

Partners Worldwide

At Partners Worldwide the word "partner" is more than just a key part of our name—it is the foundation upon which our entire organization is built. While our model focuses on the partnership between like-minded business people passionate about business solutions to ending poverty, Partners Worldwide has had a long-standing partnership with the CRWRC and the CRC in our collective effort to transform lives and communities worldwide.

The staff of Partners Worldwide works closely with CRWRC staff in key areas around the world to leverage the skills and abilities of business people as a critical part of the solution to developing a small business sector that can facilitate sustainable results to address important social issues such as unemployment, orphan care, food security and HIV/Aids. These partnerships between multiple organizations and the local business communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America lead to long-term solutions that maximize the resources and abilities of each party.

Created in 1997, Partners Worldwide has grown to serve in 20 developing countries worldwide. Establishing an international network of business and professional people, Partners Worldwide functions to create jobs, end the cycle of poverty and transform communities. Partners Worldwide is committed to forming business mentoring partnerships, offering training in basic business practices and improving access to capital. These efforts combined have resulted in the creation of 1,656 jobs and the retention of 16,812 jobs in 2008. Learn more at www.partnersworldwide.org.