

***DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRIES JOURNEY
FOR THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
OF NORTH AMERICA
FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRANSFORMING
LIVES AND COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE***

**Prepared by
Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team**

**Prepared for
Executive Leadership CRCNA
And Ministry Leadership Council**

**With Report to
Board of Trustees**

Spring/Summer 2014

Table of Contents

Section	Page
I. Introduction to This Journey Document	
A. Why a “Fundamentally Reframed” Journey Document	3
B. There Is Much to Celebrate in Ministry in the CRCNA	3
C. The Changing Context Provides Significant Opportunities for Ministry	4
D. Biblical, Confessional, and Theological Perspectives about Our Journey	5
E. Explanation of Technical and Adaptive Change	6
II Addressing the Key Ministry Challenges	7
Relationship of the Key Ministry Challenges and the Five Streams	8
A. Supporting Congregations and Classes in Their Ministries	9
(1) Congregations in Context	9
(2) Congregations as Key Focus	13
(3) Classes under Stress	16
(4) Celebrating, Learning, and Listening	20
B. Developing a Shared Ministry and Organizational Culture	22
(5) Younger Generations Increasingly Disconnected	22
(6) Progress Becoming Multicultural Church Is Continuing to Lag	26
(7) Something Missing in Discipleship, Spirituality, and Being Spirit-Led	29
(8) Lay Leadership and Clergy Formation	32
C. Shaping Ministry to Be Flexible and Adaptive	36
(9) The Continuous Process of Change	36
(10) Sustainability Centralized Ministry in Question	39
(11) New Financial Paradigm	42
(12) Changing Patterns of Ministry and Partnership in Global Church	45
D. Clarifying Our Identity and Ministry Focus	47
(13) Direction of the CRCNA and Shared Identity	47
Appendix A: Overview of Process	50
Appendix B: Designing New Behaviors and Forming Learning Communities	52
Appendix C: Two Ministry Challenges which Need to Be Addressed Somewhere within the Denominational System	54
Appendix D: Original List of Nineteen Key Ministry Challenges from the SCAN	55

Section I

Introduction to This Journey Document

A. Why a “Fundamentally Reframed” Journey Document?

Well-considered questions live at the core of the Christian Church. “*What is your only comfort in life and in death?*” frames a central tenet of our shared faith, with its answer providing a firm foundation for a life centered in Christ. Another question, “*How Shall We Now Live?*” is an important follow-up question to ask and is the focus this Journey document seeks to address.

Life is dynamic and we are always dealing with change as we are led by the Spirit to respond to the contexts within which we live. This Journey document invites everyone in the CRCNA to enter into important conversations to explore together how best to respond to the Spirit’s leading in the midst of our changing circumstances.

The CRCNA’s Board of Trustees in 2012 mandated a “**Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team**” (SPACT) to develop a fundamentally reframed denominational ministries plan to address our current ministry challenges in two ways: (1) continue to utilize the best of our knowledge, skills, and resources to shape strategies that address these various challenges—what this document refers to as “*technical change*”; and (2) to name and address challenges for which we presently do not have answers, but must address—what this plan refers to as “*adaptive change*.”

B. There Is Much to Celebrate in Ministry in the CRCNA

Significant ministry is taking place across the church that needs to be named and celebrated as the church continues to address the challenges it faces in our changing context. Some illustrative examples are listed here, with other examples appearing throughout as “existing new behaviors.”

Congregations and Other Local Ministries

- Networking with local community based resources, as well as other churches, to address the welfare of the community.
- Initiating creative connections with globally focused people and organizations in order to experience international ministry and culture.

Classes

- Working in relevant clusters for mutual ministry, learning, and leadership development in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
- Developing dynamic prayer networks.
- Coordinating exchange and developing outreach with RCA counterparts.

Agencies

- Reorganizing for ministry coordination and support.
- Coordinating with each other, and with international partners and networks, to enhance ministry effectiveness that leads to fundamental change at community and country levels.

- Providing leadership in collaborative networks to encourage use of effective mission principles and leveraging impact

Specialized Ministries

- Provision of well recognized technical and consultative support to churches which is a model to other denominations.
- Providing leadership in related networks that allow for influence beyond what our size would suggest.

Related Institutions

- Initiating new on-line training, learning circles, forums and institutes that continue to raise effective leaders.
- Highly rated college, again with alumni influencing society and culture for Christ way beyond the scope of what the CRC size would indicate.

C. The Changing Context Provides Significant Opportunities for Ministry

The Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team that prepared this journey document first developed what is known as a SCAN—a comprehensive look at the changing contexts in North America (external SCAN) as well as the life and ministry of the CRCNA (internal SCAN). Extensive summaries were compiled on key trends and placed into a power point presentation.

This SCAN provided the data base for identifying the key ministry challenges the CRCNA needs to address. Some of the challenges identified, especially in the external SCAN, actual represent opportunities to be pursued as much as problems to be solved. Several illustrative examples are provided below. (One should access the full SCAN report for a more detailed picture.)

Canada

- The total population stood at around 33.5 million as of the 2011 census and is expected to grow to 42 million by 2050.
- The biggest population shift is in regard to immigration from Asia where 45% of all immigrants were coming as of 2011—the most currently coming from the Philippines, India, and China. This is projected to increase to 55% by 2031.
- The biggest shift is in the decline of immigrants from Europe, which represented 66% in 1981, but only 31% in 2011 and is projected to fall to only 20% by 2031.
- The religious makeup of immigrants coming into Canada indicates 39% identifying themselves as Christian, another 39% identify with another world religion, and 21% have no religious affiliation.

United States

- The total population stood at 310 million as of the 2010 censuses and is projected to increase to about 438 million by 2050—increase of 130 million.

- In 1960, the white portion of the population stood at 85% but by 2010 had declined to around 65%. It is expected to decline to around 46% by 2050.
- The largest increase in immigrant growth is Hispanic/Latino, which represented less than 4% in 1960, increased to 16% in 2010, and is projected to stand at 30% by 2050.
- The overwhelming majority of immigrants coming into the US identify themselves as being Christian, some 74% of all immigrants in 2010.

D. Biblical, Confessional, and Theological Perspectives About Our Journey

Biblical Perspectives Regarding the Journey:

Creation—The Triune God created all

- Gen 1:1 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ...”
- John 1:3 “All things came into existence through (Jesus), ...”

Redemption—The Triune God is seeking to bring redemption to all

- John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son ...”
- II Cor 19 “That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself ...”

Eschatological Fulfillment—The Triune God will bring all to completion in Christ

- Luke 17:20-21 “... for, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.”
- Eph 1:9-10 “... as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in (Christ).”

Confessional Perspectives Regarding the Journey

Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony

1. As followers of Jesus Christ,
living in this world—which some seek to control, and others view with despair—
we declare with joy and trust: Our world belongs to God!
2. From the beginning, through all the crises of our times,
until the kingdom fully comes, God keeps covenant forever:
Our world belongs to God! God is King: Let the earth be glad!
Christ is victor: his rule has begun! The Spirit is at work: creation is renewed!

Theological Affirmations Regarding the Journey

1. God is at work in the world, through the movement of the Holy Spirit among individuals, congregations, agencies and denominations, leading us to participate in God’s mission in the world within our many and diverse communities across North America.
2. God is continuing to shape our identity as a contextualized ministry, rooted in our Reformed heritage while seeking to be relevant to those we serve, as we adapt our ministry structures to empower congregations and classes for ministry in their local contexts.

E. Explanation of Technical and Adaptive Challenges

The terms “technical” and “adaptive” were developed by Heifetz and Linsky in their book *Leadership on the Line*.¹ They wanted to answer the question: What do organizations and leaders do in times of significant, discontinuous change when established ways of doing things that no longer work? In order to address this question, they proposed that there are two types of challenges organizations face today: technical and adaptive.

Technical Challenges

Technical challenges can be addressed using our existing knowledge, skills and expertise. This is because technical challenges:

- Are capable of being clearly defined
- Have identifiable goals with anticipated outcomes
- Can be addressed using known methods and available resources
- Can be addressed by relying on our current expertise (professionals)

Examples

- Organize a short-term mission trip
- Re-structure classis to focus more on shared ministry
- Develop an annual national prayer conference

Adaptive Challenges

Adaptive challenges lie beyond our existing knowledge, skills, and expertise and require that we engage in some new behaviors in order to address them. This is because adaptive challenges:

- Are unclear and often murky
- Cannot be addressed using known programs and resources
- Make existing expertise unreliable
- Often involve unpredictable change

An adaptive challenge is best identified by asking and working to answer this question:

What challenges are we currently facing, for which we presently do not have an answer, but which we must address, if we are to live into God’s future for us?

Turning a key ministry challenge into an adaptive challenge is much like understanding an iceberg where only a small portion of the mass is visible above the surface, yet we have only a vague understanding of what may be hidden below. We need to go beneath the surface to find out what is actually involved, what the underlying reality is that is shaping the ministry challenge. The logic of addressing adaptive challenges is to “practice our way into new thinking” by engaging in some new behaviors.

See Appendix B for explanation of “designing new behaviors” and “forming learning communities.”

¹ Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2002), 13-20.

Section II

Addressing Key Ministry Challenges

A. Supporting Congregations and Classes in Their Ministries

- (1) Congregations Are Continuing To Discover That They Need to Learn/Relearn How to Connect/Reconnect with the Local Contexts in Which They Minister
- (2) Congregations Ministering in Their Local Contexts Need to Be a Key Focus of Denominational Ministry
- (3) Many Classes Are under Stress, and the Structure, Purposes, Ministry, and Leadership of Classes No Longer Work as Well as in the Past
- (4) Denominational Agencies and Ministries Lack Sufficient Ways for Celebrating, Learning, and Listening in Partnership with CRC Members, Congregations, and Classes

B. Developing a Shared Ministry and Organizational Culture

- (5) Many in the Younger Generations Are Increasingly Disconnected from the CRC and Are Exiting
- (6) Our Progress in Becoming a Multicultural Church Is Continuing to Lag Behind the Changing North American Context
- (7) There Is an Increased Awareness in the Church that Something Is Missing with Regard to Discipleship, Spirituality, and Being Spirit-Led
- (8) Lay Leadership Is Under-Emphasized and Clergy Formation Processes Are Inadequate for Engaging the Challenges before the Denomination

C. Shaping Ministry to Be Flexible and Adaptive

- (9) Many Congregations, Classes, and Denominational Ministries Are Not Sure How to Deal with the Continuous Process of Change
- (10) The Operation and Sustainability of Our Centralized Ministry Delivery System Are Now in Question
- (11) We Are Not Sure How to Move into a New Financial Paradigm
- (12) Our Denominational Ministries and Local Congregations Have Not Sufficiently Adapted to Changing Patterns of Ministry and Partnership Alignments in the Global Church

D. Clarifying Our Identity and Ministry Focus

- (13) The Direction and Overall Focus of the CRCNA Are No Longer Clear, and Our Sense of a Shared Identity Is No Longer Self-Evident

Relationship of the Key Ministry Challenges And the Five Streams

The Five Streams were developed by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture for use as ministry priorities and values for organizational development within the Christian Reformed Church in North America. These streams were endorsed by Synod to be sent to the churches for discussion. The SPACT team reviewed these streams in regard for how they inter-faced with the 13 key ministry challenges. The primary learning was that most of the challenges fit into or inter-face with multiple streams. It will be important for those working to implement this journey document to take into consideration these multiple intersections especially as work teams are formed and implementation steps are designed.

MATRIX FIVE STREAMS & KEY MINISTRY CHALLENGES	Faith Formation	Global Missions	Servant Leadership	Gospel Proclamation & Worship	Mercy & Justice
<i>Congregations in Context</i>	X	x	x	x	x
<i>Congregations as Key Focus</i>	X	x	x	x	x
<i>Purpose and Structure of Classes</i>			x		
<i>Celebrating, Learning, and Listening</i>	X	x	x	x	x
<i>Younger Generations</i>	X	x			x
<i>Multicultural Church</i>		x	x		x
<i>Discipleship, Spirituality, Spirit-Led</i>	X		x		
<i>Lay Leadership & Clergy Formation</i>	X		x		
<i>Continuous Process of Change</i>	X	x	x	x	x
<i>Both Distributed & Centralized</i>	X	x	x	x	x
<i>New Financial Paradigm</i>	X	x	x	x	x
<i>Partnerships in the Global Church</i>		x			x
<i>Overall Focus and Shared Identity</i>	X	x	x	x	x

A. Supporting Congregations and Classes in Their Ministries

[1] Congregations Are Continuing To Discover That They Need to Learn/Relearn How to Connect/Reconnect with the Local Contexts in Which They Minister

As massive demographic and cultural changes have taken place in North America over the past 50 years, many CRCNA congregations are experiencing disconnects from their ministry contexts. The influx of multiple cultures increased social-cultural diversity, lifestyle differences, and justice and poverty issues present challenges to many of the historical values and practices of CRC church life. Many congregations are finding they need to engage in a more participatory and relational approach to life valued by many people in today's broader context. This means these congregations need to *listen to* and *learn from and with* the "other" within their contexts—a practical approach that is new for many of us in the CRC.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to be addressed

- The overwhelming majority of responses to the external SCAN were to read them as negative rather than presenting opportunities for expanded ministry—we need to develop a more nuanced reading of our context.
- We find it difficult to see ourselves from the "outside in" and we need to address this if we are going to engage well our changing context.
- Our defaults tend to lead us toward circling the wagons and trying to solve things on our own terms rather than working to develop genuine relationships with the "other" and developing a posture of learning with and from them.
- The reality is that while many in the communities of color in the CRC highly value our theology, they are also calling for the church to be more participatory and relational yet the majority of our pastors have not been trained for a relational style of ministry.
- There is a deeply held perception regularly expressed that the denomination is too hierarchical and bureaucratic.
- The agencies and ministries do not have a clear and shared map of what is currently being done to support congregations in engaging their contexts, and they lack an integrated alignment of stewarding their resources to assist congregations in such.
- We have yet to identify and develop better mechanisms for communication and collaboration between agencies and institutions and to regularly engage in the practice of tables of collaboration.
- The executive leadership of the denomination needs to utilize its convening power to encourage the agencies and ministries to develop more and better partnerships with congregations to assist them in connecting with these contexts.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Current examples of ministries being used that are assisting congregations in connecting with their local context.
 - Home Missions clusters
 - Deaconal Ministries Canada
 - Communities First Association—Assessment Survey
 - Partners in Neighborhood Transformation
 - 3DM (Mike Breen)—5 ways to engage a neighbor
 - “Parish Collective”—as its own initiative (inhabit conference—Geography)
 - Classes agenda for sharing best practices: CRHM presently keeps track of their work regarding how various “clusters” inform classes
 - CRMT
 - Tables of Collaboration
 - Calvin Theological Seminary Lab for renewal
 - Network
 - Electronic media like facebook
 - Recovery Ministies
 - Race Relations (Community Connect)

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Create a mechanism for churches to easily and readily access all resources available to them from the CRCNA denomination; a one stop shop!
2. Develop a clear mapping of all current initiatives by agencies and ministries being directed with or toward congregations. Assess and adjust these as needed and align these efforts. Identify and use the key points of leverage for best ministering with and to congregations in relation to their local contexts.
 Convening Entity:
 Those Participating:
3. Identify all the tools and resources that the agencies and ministries currently make available to congregations for learning to read and engage their local contexts. Assess their current effectiveness, and then, in partnership with a select number of strategic congregations, further re-develop these tools or design new ones as needed. At least one tool should deal with a congregational discernment process for listening to and learning from the “other(s)” in the local context.
 Convening Entity:
 Those Participating:
4. Develop in partnership with a select number of strategic congregations a learning community which can utilize action learning to engage new ministry opportunities through designing and implementing new behaviors in their local contexts. Make what is learned available to the collaborative tables as well as the larger church.
 Convening Entity:
 Those Participating:

5. Cultivate a regular practice of convening listening spaces between the agencies and ministries in relation to various groupings of congregations and then bring what is learned to the collaborative tables for agencies and ministries to assess how best to utilize and act on it.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

6. Provide incentives for congregations to engage in new initiatives that are related to their context (Sustaining Pastoral Excellence/Sustaining Congregational Excellence model). Find budget for this through creative fundraising.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

Many of our congregations are reluctant to take risks to engage in mutual learning relationships, both within and without. Therefore, we lack mutual relationships with our neighbors and do not make meaningful connections in our local communities. Our defaults tend to be more programmatic and less relational, which keep us at a distance from each other and the “other.”

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Current Initiatives

1. CRHM currently is currently conducting and learning from at least ten (10) initiatives in trying to help congregations engage their local contexts.
2. CRHM with the RCA developed the Church Multiplication Initiative, which has started Kingdom Enterprise Zones (KEZ) in 11 locations throughout North America. Each KEZ has local RCA and CRC pastors as co-leaders who are bringing together their respective denominations through classis and congregational teams, resulting in many collaborative community connections. For example, one zone has over 700 mentors signed up to connect with local public school students.
3. Communities First Association is currently resourcing congregations to organize outreach with their communities, the goal being community transformation.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Invite a small number of interested and willing congregations to develop partnerships with local community organizations and neighboring churches for addressing issues and needs in their local contexts. Convene a learning community among participating congregations to share what they discovered.

2. Invite a small number of interested and willing congregations in multicultural communities to partner with local leaders in their diverse communities to assist in redecorating their churches to reflect the diversity that is present in their local contexts.
3. Invite interested and willing congregations to convene listening sessions with their neighbors in their local context to learn what they perceive to be issues which need to be addressed. Convene a learning community among participating congregations to share what they discovered.
4. Invite a small number of interested and willing congregations to take one Sunday a year to suspend their regular worship service and, instead, send their people out into their local communities to connect with what others are doing during that time. Convene a learning community among participating congregations to share what they discovered.

[2] Congregations Ministering in Their Local Contexts Need to Be a Key Focus of Denominational Ministry

Our denominational agencies and ministries have functioned well for many years, partnering in ministry around the globe and initiating ministries in North America—all with the faithful support of CRC congregations. This system, however, has come under increased stress as congregations find themselves struggling to engage or re-engage in their local contexts and to think “local” in trying to focus their ministries. Many congregations are feeling increasingly disconnected from the denominational agencies, ministries, and executive leadership of the CRC. The historically strong loyalty within the system has been eroding, and the perceived value of supporting shared ministry is declining. Denominational leaders, agencies, and specialized ministries need to make partnering with congregations a priority.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- Denominational ministries need to help/engage leaders coming out of seminary and local congregations to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to make meaningful denominational connections with their local congregation.
- There is a default of denominational ministries toward trying to maintain the status quo.
- Many leaders in denominational agencies and ministries lack the necessary skills and adequate resources for facilitation and serving as consultants—the default is toward centralization of systems and control of ministry.
- The content and methodology of communications is not effective in building a sufficient understanding for congregations about what denominational ministries can offer as partners.
- There is often difficulty for congregations to receive quick responses and locate resources in denominational offices to address their ministry concerns or opportunities.
- The high level of transition of congregational members with designated roles makes it difficult for denominational ministries to know who to connect with.
- Denominational ministries also need to partner more effectively with classes to help provide space for meaningful conversations between denominational ministries and local congregations.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Sustaining Pastoral Excellence
- Classis Renewal Ministry Team
- Classical interim committees and classical ministry teams
- Current collaborative Work Groups
- The Network
- CRCNA website
- ServiceLink
- Diaconal Ministries of Canada

- Home Missions
- Office of Social Justice

Additional Resources Available

- Communities First Association
- Interfaith initiatives
- Community and Neighborhood Associations – eg. Volunteers in Service, Love Inc.
- Community Opportunity Scan
- PERCEPT (goes through census data in US)
- Lily Grant Funding

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Sponsor and regularly convene a variety of learning communities among groups of congregations where denominational agencies and ministries can listen and learn from local congregations regarding current practices, and then share the promising practices more broadly.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
2. Utilize the listening sessions to revamp denominational communication and support services to align with what is being learned in order to more effectively link local churches and denominational ministries. Regularly review what is working well and replicate where possible.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
3. Design and implement a plan for partnering with congregations and classes to convene regional gatherings across the church for various activities such as education, inspiration, sharing promising practices, and engaging in spiritual formation.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
4. Study the history and work of the Network and develop a system that gives congregations ready access to resources at the denominational level and that supports the process of mutual and interactive learning among congregations and leaders across the church.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

Local churches are trying to serve in ministry, both locally and globally. There is some recognition that this could be best done in partnership with their denomination, however, there seems to be a structural disconnect between many denominational initiatives and the ministries

of local congregations. In addition, many local churches no longer see the value of trying to make meaningful connections to the denomination. The historical affinities that bound us together in the past are no longer adequately working and we don't know how to fix it.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. CRHM has made a commitment to place congregations front and center in its current strategic plan and to partner with them in seeking to discern together what God is doing in their local contexts.
2. CRHM has in place fifty-nine (59) mission clusters or networks of congregational leaders, which exist parallel to and usually in partnership with classes, and which are seeking to discern what God is doing in their local communities and to partner together to participate in this work.
3. The Lilly Grant peer groups continue to function as a type of learning community for pastors to learn from and also support one another.
4. Build on the Reformed Collaborative focusing on the Leadership Initiative and the Church Multiplication Initiative.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Invite a small number of interested and willing classes and congregations to sponsor regional events that focus on helping congregations engage in ministry within their local contexts. Convene a learning community among participating congregations to share what they discovered.
2. Invite a small number of interested and willing congregations to develop a partner congregation either locally or somewhere across the denomination, or outside the denomination, where there are similarities of ministry opportunities or challenges. Convene a learning community among participating congregations to share what they discovered.
3. Invite interested and willing leaders from a small number of diverse congregations to convene as a learning community, with agency and ministry personnel present to listen, for the purpose of exploring what is working and how they might better be served by and utilize denominational resources.

[3] Many Classes Are under Stress, and the Structure, Purposes, Ministry, and Leadership of Classes No Longer Work as Well as in the Past

Classis leaders, especially stated clerks, are increasingly expressing concern about the decline of energy, interest, and leadership investment in classis work today. A significant number of classes in some regions today do not seem able to initiate and support regional ministry among their member congregations. A recent classical renewal initiative was beneficial for a time in helping classes focus and support their ministries, but this required significant ongoing investment of denominational time, assets, and energy to achieve results, and this initiative was not sustained in the midst of leadership transition.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- The way we train classis functionaries i.e. stated clerks, synodical deputies, etc. is not working very well at present.
- We have not attended well to utilizing the technical changes that have been tried in the past nor adequately assessed how well they have or have not addressed the issues.
- The identity and role of classis in today's complex world does not always seem to align with the expectations of the church order.
- There is a need for a clearer vision regarding what should be the purpose and basic ministry role of classis beyond governance functions.
- The high turnover of classical leaders and delegates has a negative impact on the necessary continuity and consistency classes require to run well.
- There seems to be a deep resistance in our system to change from old or ineffective models of operating as a classis.
- There are widely varying geographic and cultural differences between classes that make it difficult to support mutual accountability within many classes and across the system as a whole.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Classis Renewal Ministry Team—history and experience
- Better Together—addressing classis functionaries and their roles
- Classical/regional networks of agencies and offices (Home Missions Regional Teams, Safe Church Network)
- Calvin Seminary/Port St. Lucie, Florida leadership development pilot
- Director of Synodical Services
- Classical Ministry Leadership Teams – that handle candidacy

Additional Resources Available

- Judicatory models of other denominations both within the Reformed tradition (RCA, PCUSA, EPC) and outside of the Reformed tradition.
- We have a wealth of experience to draw on including excellent examples of classes who have achieved significant change (eg. Classis Holland and GR-East)
- Resources available on www.crcna.org under Synodical Services link
- Classis page on The Network
- Classis ministry staff persons
- Classis prayer coordinators

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Have Executive Leadership coordinate the work of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team to initiate necessary changes in the church order to clarify and strengthen the ministry role of classis beyond its governance functions as well as to address the issues related to credentialing and representation at classis (e.g. new churches not yet organized).
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
2. Have Executive Leadership review the role of classis for strengthening ministry and then mandate an appropriate task group to assess the current classical boundaries in considering possible re-configuring of these boundaries and the size of classes. Size is especially urgent in terms of consideration of adjustments.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
3. Give the Classis Renewal Ministry Team (CRMT) the mandate to address this challenge and the resources to accomplish it. Incorporate what is being learned from the emerging patterns of partnership between classes and mission clusters/networks, build on the work of “Better Together” being developed by specialized ministries, and develop a clear connection between CRMT, Executive Leadership, and Synodical Services.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
4. Develop and implement a workable approach for persons serving the various classical functions (e.g. all the clerks) to network with one another in sharing promising practices in order to encourage peer learning.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
5. Utilize communications technology to convene classis meetings and share information, especially in geographical areas which are spread out.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

The historical design of classes based on the church order and the widely varying geographic differences and cultures of our classes make it very difficult to support mutual accountability, develop a shared vision, and effectively cultivate the development of congregational leaders. Structural changes attempted in the past have not adequately met this challenge, and we do not know what changes will fully address it.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. The CRMT has worked in the past in initiating new behaviors in working toward strengthening the work of classis in both its governance and ministry functions.
2. The mission clusters and networks initiated by CRHM are exploring new ways for congregations to be in ministry together in their regional areas.
3. Invite a small group of classes to practice new ways of processing classical business. Convene a learning community among participating classes to share what they discovered.
4. Invite a small number of classes which are interested and willing to have the same persons attend the classis meetings for a full year in order to assess what delegate continuity might do to improve the quality of classis decision making.
5. Track and learn from lessons coming from joint CRC/RCA Classes meetings.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Convene a learning community of several classes which are working on initiating new behaviors to improve their governance and ministry functions; and resource this learning community with leadership with experience coming out of CRMT history.
2. Invite several classes that are in geographic proximity (whether or not short or long distances are involved) to engage in a three-year initiative of functioning as one classis in order to explore the viability of functioning as a larger classis, or studying the sharing of common functions for classes that are in close proximity.
3. Make grant funding available on a match-grant basis for multiple classes to employ a staff person for transformational ministry for at least a three-year period of time.
4. Invite several classes to convene clusters of congregations to explore what shared ministry in their local contexts might entail. Convene a learning community among participating classes to share what they discovered.

5. Consult and study the experience of other denominations, such as the RCA and ECO, to learn what their experience has been in adjusting the ministry and functions of their middle judicatories.

[4] Denominational Agencies and Ministries Lack Sufficient Ways for Celebrating, Learning, and Listening in Partnership with CRC Members, Congregations, and Classes

Our denominational agencies and ministries need better practices for reflective learning with and from classes, congregations, and church members. CRCNA ministries tend to engage in convening and listening when they have something they want or need to do, and they proceed to provide programs or resources to address identified needs. Our rapidly changing context calls for all expressions to be more creative and flexible in pursuing ministry, but that involves some risk-taking, which has not been highly valued in CRC church life. In addition, all expressions of the church tend to miss opportunities to celebrate creative and innovative approaches to ministry.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- Denominational programming for congregations is perceived as having operated from a practice of one size fits all.
- The ecclesiastical structure of the church constrains creativity and flexibility for congregational engagement in local ministry.
- We need to find ways use technology that maintains cultural sensitivity to the value of relationships that are of great value to some cultures
- We need to identify mechanisms of social media that are appropriate to foster the better use of technology – e.g. written communications lack tone of voice, body language, and limits discernment.
- Need to find a way to level the playing field by taking into account the lack of parity among congregations and members – e.g. not all churches have the financial resources and/or human resources for either travel or the expanded use of technology.
- Need to develop the capacity to use multiple methods and communication channels that reach the diversity of people in our denomination.
- Need for denominational ministries to celebrate together with congregations
- We need for invitational and active listening to become an alternative to always focusing on problem-solving, resourcing, and critiquing.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Cultural Intelligence workshops
- Webinars for mutual engagement
- Blogs and/or CRCNA Facebook
- Simulcast events like the Calvin College January Series
- Home Missions clusters, church planter gatherings
- Conferences – multi-ethnic, worship symposium, black and reformed, and chaplains conferences, C3 in Canada
- Conference calls with synodical deputies

- Banner stories
- Denominational IT Department
- Denominational Communications Office

Strategies for Initial Implementation

Note: If the strategies and new behaviors identified in the ministry challenges 1-3 are done well, then this challenge will likely also to have been addressed.

B. Developing a Shared Ministry and Organizational Culture

[5] Many in the Younger Generations Are Increasingly Disconnected from the CRC and Are Exiting

Denominational loyalty for many in today's younger generations seems to be less passionate than in earlier generations. In recent years the loyalty shown by younger generations within their local congregations has also declined, though less substantially than at the denominational level. In addition, the average age of CRC members today is significantly older than that of the general population, and most CRC congregations have fewer young families in their membership than in the past. In connection with this, a smaller percentage of households with school-age children are using Christian education than in past generations.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to be addressed

- Need more data on the various reasons the younger generation is leaving, staying and returning to the CRC.
- Need more data on where those who are leaving are going.
- Need more data on the ages and life phases when persons leave, stay and return to CRC.
- Need to define and clarify the generations and their unique characteristics.
- Identify when and why younger generations who do come other churches or from an under-churched background are doing so.
- Need to know what correlation exists if any of decline in Christian school attendance and home schooling by the younger generation attending or becoming church members.
- Need to identify the congregations that have a high level of retaining and attracting younger generations. What are they doing that is working well?
- Need to better define the role of information and communications technology and how it can be best used with engaging younger generations.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Dynamic Youth Ministries
- Christian Colleges – Calvin, Dordt, Trinity, Redeemer, Kings, Calvin Theological Seminary
- YALT – Young Adult Leadership Team
- ServiceLink
- Campus ministries of CRHM
- Young Adult Representatives to Synod program
- Faith Formation / LEAP – Linked Engagement Action Programs
- BTGMI English language programs
- AOYC – All Ontario Youth Convention
- World Renew – volunteer and service opportunities with Disaster Response and international internships

- World Missions – Hope Equals and Summer Missions Programs

Additional Available Resources

- Faith Alive curriculum called “WE” which encourages multi-generational engagement in church
- Internships – International Youth Internship Program,
- Volunteer Opportunities – eg. SERVE Projects, Disaster Response Services groups, SWAP – Serving with a Purpose, Summer Missions Program
- GEMS, Cadets
- Facing Your Future (CTS)
- Church Planters – focusing specifically on youth and young adults
- Campus Ministers or leaders
- Outside of CRC Programs – Youth For Christ, YWAM – Youth With A Mission, Campus Crusade, Young Life, Intervarsity, Navigators
- Other denominations like RCA – Reformed Church of America

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Gather accurate and up to date information which reflects the diversity among the younger generations on the why, where, and when of the departures of such persons from the CRC as well as their joining, remaining, and returning to the CRC. Clarify as possible the key transition points in the faith formation process. Identify churches that have attracted and retained younger generations well and learn what their promising practices are. Study how our trends compare with the experiences of other denominations.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
2. Assess the current linkage with Youth Unlimited and identify how best to utilize this partnership to help churches address the challenges associated with working with CRC youth. (Build on the work that Derek Atkins is doing.)
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
3. Revisit the process of profession of faith and membership and utilize available research to assess and further develop this process as needed. (Build on Syd Hielema’s work in Faith Formation.)
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
4. Engage representatives from the younger generations in the strategic planning and structuring of ministries processes and explore with them how to use information and communication technology more effectively.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:

5. Engage younger generations in addressing the challenges of self-funding or fundraising for service-learning volunteer opportunities where resources are limited for those from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

The traditional ways we have understood and practiced being the church, which appeared to have worked for many years, are no longer resonating with many in the younger generations sufficiently enough to keep them in our churches. They are leaving now in greater numbers than in the past and we are not fully sure why. Many of our members still cherish the traditional patterns and practices of our heritage and feel like we are losing something important when these are changed. And we do not know how to address this.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. CRWM currently has a summer mission opportunity available—need to assess and learn from this process in exploring possible new behaviors to initiate.
2. CRHM Campus Ministries is currently trying some new behaviors in their outreach initiatives on various campuses.
3. The Young Adult Leadership Team- is currently trying a variety of initiatives that the agencies or ministries need to examine for ways in which they might partner.
4. BTGMI is working to connect youth groups to their work—need to assess and learn from this process in exploring possible new behaviors to initiate.
5. Convene and learn from the churches that have had experience with having young adults and /or youths participate with their Council.
6. Learn from the agencies that have placed youth delegates on their Boards.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Convene several collaborative learning communities of persons from the younger generations for the purpose of learning how to address the issues associated with this challenge, letting them design and implement possible new behaviors related to ministry practices. (An example would be studying and learning from the cultural shift of those delaying marriage until their late 20's and early 30's.)

2. Develop experiments with programs at Christian Colleges that can help explore the issues associated with this challenge.

[6] Our Progress in Becoming a Multicultural Church Is Continuing to Lag Behind the Changing North American Context

North America is becoming increasingly multicultural though the patterns of diversity are different in Canada (more Pacific Rim) than the U.S. (more Hispanic and African). While denominational offices and agencies have begun initiatives for addressing multicultural issues, their various ministries and responsibilities are perceived as not being well integrated or coordinated. Although the denomination has done some good work theologically and has intentionally pursued increasing multicultural diversity, persons in communities of color still feel substantially marginalized within denominational life. One of the most significant challenges in developing a more multicultural church lies in engaging in leadership development at all levels and also in attending to issues related to credentialing.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to be addressed

- We have tended historically to practice an isolationist mentality from the broader culture.
- Our current identity does not sufficient value ethnic diversity.
- We do not do well in engaging in cross-cultural communication.
- We have some stories of success in engaging in multi-cultural ministry, but these are not shared adequately across the system.
- We do not tend to know how to engage in “deep listening” with those who are different.
- We often fail to attend to the power dynamics regarding the way we structure our shared life together (e.g. running of meetings).
- Our stated values in this area and our current operational strategies are not congruent.
- We do not know how to connect with the next level of leaders from different cultures.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- DORR
- Cultural Intelligence Building
- Our present communities and persons of color
- Our theology
- PRFC
- CCT
- Our approved policies for addressing this challenge
- Entrada at Calvin
- Multi-ethnic
- Student body at Calvin Seminary
- DLPG and Colin Watson
- Community Connect
- DRS, SERVE, ServiceLink, local church ministry connections
- Cross cultural internship at CTS

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Develop a mapping of the current multi-cultural ministry within our congregations, identify examples of where progress is being made on this challenge resulting in fruitful ministry, and identify especially those experiences and connections that build passion within leaders for addressing the issue of diversity and multi-cultural ministry.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

2. Review all existing denominational resources that address this issue, update or edit as needed any which we want to continue to use, and then develop and implement a promotion plan for their further distribution and use within the denomination. Focus on building capacity for cultural communication, deep listening, and addressing power dynamics so that ownership is built for ministry across ethnic lines.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

3. Have Executive Leadership convene a collaborative conversation with representative personnel in all agencies and ministries who are tasked with addressing this issue, and explore how to better align or best structure the current ministries or required initiatives. Then implement the proposed design in collaboration with the MLC.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

4. Have Executive Leadership work with Human Resources to clarify expectations for addressing this issue in the workplace as well as provide training for supervisors on how to relate and supervise cross culturally.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

5. Have Executive Leadership continue with the commitments which have already been made and provide a regular update of report to the MLC and BOT (e.g. DLPG, DORR, and training for all CRCNA staff).

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

6. Have Executive Leadership work with BOT to ensure diversity in representation among all boards and also develop and maintain a list of possible future multi-cultural leaders who can serve. (YALT and DLPG indicate they have a comprehensive list of young leaders that will serve as an excellent resource.)

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

7. Have the planners of Synod look at how to incorporate issues of diversity and the celebration of gifts from multiple ethnic groups into the process at Synod meetings.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

In spite of our clearly stated values and some very intentional strategic initiatives which have been modestly successful, our mono-cultural heritage continues to hinder us from becoming a genuinely multicultural denomination and we are not sure how to overcome this.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. The Diversity in Leadership Working Group (DLPG) is exploring ways to become a better multi-cultural church. Encourage them to identify ways to increase accountability.
2. There is a Partnership for Racism Free Community (PRFC) which some congregations are experimenting with in the Grand Rapids area—review this to see if it might also function in other locations.
3. Facilitate learning across bi-national and regional lines. For instance working against racism and working with aboriginal communities is context specific and can generate good cross-learning.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Convene a learning community of multi-cultural leaders, in whatever configuration they prefer, to explore what is at stake in addressing this ministry challenge and to also identify possible new behaviors for the CRCNA to engage in at any or all levels. Develop a series of initiatives to try out these new behaviors.
2. Convene a learning community of key churches that are intentionally multi-ethnic and invite them to identify possible new behaviors for the CRCNA to engage in at any or all levels. Develop a series of initiatives to try out these new behaviors.
3. Engage in an initiative with a small number of interested and willing congregations to use the arts for helping to cultivate cross-cultural relations.
4. Have the Executive Leadership along with key agency leaders convene a learning community of the congregations of Red Mesa to listen to and learn from their stories and what they have experienced in their journey within the CRC.

[7] There is an Increased Awareness that Something Is Missing with Regard to Discipleship, Spirituality, and Being Spirit-Led

The ever-changing context in North America challenges many congregations as they attempt to cultivate practices of discipleship among their members. Historically the CRC has relied heavily on education and imparting knowledge in order to shape disciples, but today there is a growing need to balance that with more emphasis on cultivating relationships within the use of an educational process. Today we are hearing that we need a more active emphasis on spiritual life, especially in relation to prayer, recognizing that Spirit-led discernment can revitalize the life of the church at all levels.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to be addressed

- Many of our people are very busy with daily life and live within a challenging consumerist life style.
- There is today a proliferation and uncritical use of various materials in this area.
- There is a lack of spiritual discipline in the lives of many of our people in
 - prayer
 - meditation
 - silence
- Our youth today are less engaged in matters of spiritual practices.
- There is an inherent suspicion among us of the non-cognitive dimensions of life.
- There tends to be a continued attachment to old practices that are no longer as effective as they once were, along with a resistance to change or try new approaches.
- We are not very effective in connecting communal worship with personal habits of spiritual practices.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Prayer Summit (national and regional) and 40 days of prayer programs.
- Today
- Calvin initiative
- Faith Formation Initiative
- “Seeking God’s Face”
- Back to God Ministries/Reframe Media
- Christian Day Schools
- Worship Institute

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Have the Executive Leadership appoint a task group to conduct a mapping of the various expressions of spirituality being practiced in the CRC and the resources being used. Then categorize the congregations and classes accordingly. Review this report with the MLC

and BOT and have a collaborative work team from across the agencies and ministries design and implement an action plan to address the issues which have been identified.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

2. Have executive leadership promote and cultivate corporate and personal engagement in spiritual practices and to also model and encourage a healthy spiritual vulnerability.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

3. Work with congregations that are experienced in cultivating the use of spiritual practices to develop adult education experiences in relation to the spiritual practices in congregations, focusing especially on helping persons become life-long learners.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

4. Provide congregations with the tools and resources necessary to promote intergenerational shared experiences that offer a space where conversations of the faith can be nurtured, including a prayer-partner program that invites teams of persons to engage in intergenerational prayer practices.

Convening Entity:

Participating Entities:

5. Use the Reveal materials that have been developed as a diagnostic tool to access congregational spirituality.

Adaptive Challenge Statement

Many in the CRCNA have difficulty cultivating, articulating, and celebrating the active presence and work of God's Spirit in our collective and individual practices of discipleship. Our pragmatic culture and an intellectualized faith, both of which foster a cognitive emphasis of the faith and suspicion toward contemplation and conversation that involves spirituality and intimacy with God.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. Dunamis, a ministry of the Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International, is promoting a focus in this area. They have held conferences that are well attended by CRC churches.
2. The emerging 3rd wave study may offer some perspective on how to engage in discovering new behaviors in this area.
3. The ten (10) Faith Formation coaches are working with select classes and congregations across the church and are exploring new ways for ministry in this area.

4. The Methodist Church has implemented a discernment process at its General Assembly level. See what their experience has been.
5. Learn what the results of the prayer summits at national, regional and classes levels have been.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Invite leaders from across the denomination to engage in a conversation with leaders from the seminary and colleges, to explore how to engage in discovering new behaviors in relation to cultivating spiritual practices among existing and emerging leaders in the church.
2. Convene a learning community of persons from various ethnic communities with representative agency and ministry leaders sitting in to listen and learn. Have this group share their experiences with spirituality and explore possible new behaviors for the CRC to engage in and cultivate a more vibrant participation of spiritual practices, both communally and individually.
3. Have the Executive Leadership work with Board of Trustees to practice some new behaviors of engaging in corporate and personal spiritual practices.
4. Invite perspectives and learning from the global Church.

[8] Lay Leadership Is Under-Emphasized and Clergy Formation Processes Are Inadequate for Engaging the Challenges before the Denomination

Leadership formation is an issue that affects the church at every level. Congregations are increasingly aware of the challenges of shaping lay leaders today. We need especially to develop more multicultural leadership across the church, and while our work in the past has been helpful, it is not sufficient to address the greater opportunities and challenges we are facing. Another significant challenge is better cultivation and use of women's gifts in leadership. In addition, we need to develop leaders who can lead effectively in today's challenging and changing contexts.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- There is a lingering perception that an unimaginative use of the church order forces an accountability that works against innovativeness and good leadership (eg. Rotation of elders and deacons every 3 years).
- There is a lack of intentional leadership development in the local church.
- There is a lack of lay leadership development training in the denomination.
- We continue to encounter difficulty (lack of skills and intentional policy) of including women and people of color in leadership positions throughout the church.
- Our bi-vocational (tent-making) track of clergy formation and utilization is underdeveloped.
- Our default leadership model tends to be the "solo" pastor and our metaphor of shepherd/sheep contributes to under functioning of the laity and distorted expectations of pastors.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Leadership Development Networks
- Ridder initiative (with RCA)
- Church renewal lab
- Kingdom Enterprise zones – with RCA (Reformed Church of America)
- Deeper journey and Pastors on Point for pastors
- Days of Encouragement
- Staff and leadership retreats
- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Worship Symposium
- Dynamic Youth Ministries
- Volunteers in Service
- Stephen Ministries
- Facing Your Future
- Elder/Deacon Training in various local CRC churches

Additional Resources Available

- Network website
- Community Opportunity Scan and Communities First Association
- Training kits and books from Faith Alive
- Christian colleges and universities
- Young Adult Leadership Team and Linked Engagement Action Programs

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Develop and implement a project for shaping continued professional development training for pastors that they can take over several years, assess the results, and consider how such training was helpful and working might be leveraged throughout the system.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
2. Design and implement a project for the training of elders and deacons that they can take over a number of years as they prepare to take up office, assess the results, and consider how such training was helpful and working might be leveraged throughout the system (e.g. consider an online training with learning assessment afterwards).
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
3. Make available and provide training for the appropriate use of technology by leaders in carrying out ministry (e.g. Covenant Eyes).
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
4. Revisit the mandate of the Leadership Exchange and find new ways to implement this in better serving the church.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
5. Identify high potential young leaders from different backgrounds and gather them for experiences of shared learning and community building.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
6. Review the work that has been done by the various Leadership Development Networks over the past several decades, identify what might be helpful to further utilize, and then design, develop, and implement in partnership with classes a revised approach for using LDNs to multiply leaders for the church.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
7. Explore, engage, and learn from the broader conversation on the role of seminaries in ongoing education.

Adaptive Challenge Statement

Many leaders, lay and clergy, are not prepared to address the changing church and denominational context from a biblically informed and spiritually sensitive perspective. Specifically, this is pertinent in the areas of leading through change, managing conflict, practicing spiritual discernment, engaging in strategic planning, and developing lay leaders. Our system of identifying future leaders and developing them for leadership has critical gaps and perpetuates a culture that under-values the call, contribution, and development pathway of lay-leaders.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. Continue to leverage the work of the Deacon-Elder Task Force in designing new behaviors for introducing helpful change.
2. Review the recommendations of the Synodical Committee on Alternative Routes to Ministry and design possible new behaviors to help implement these recommendations.
3. There are several leadership formation initiatives already underway across the church, including: the WTS Ridder initiative, the CTS Renewal Lab, CRHM Campus Ministry, and the Office of Social Justice. Convene a conversation among the leaders of these initiatives and explore ways to learn from one another as well as join in designing possible new behaviors in this area of ministry.
4. Convene a learning community to survey best practices relative to encouraging/challenging gifted individuals to consider professional vocational ministry and to make recommendations that arise from this survey.
5. Examine and adopt, as appropriate, the process and standards used by the RCA in their designation of Commissioned Pastors.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Convene a learning community made up of a variety of lay leaders and invite them to design and implement possible new behaviors that can assist in the formation of lay leaders in the church.
2. Convene a learning community of bi-vocational pastors and invite them to design and implement possible new behaviors that can assist in the utilization of bi-vocational ministry in the church.
3. Convene a learning community of representatives of small number of interested and willing congregations and classes to Review the 1973 study on Office and Ordination and

then design an initiative for these congregations and classes to live out more fully the intent of the office of every believer being the first office in the church.

4. Develop a program for churches (training package) that informs members on the expectations of membership. e.g. (I AM A Member by Thom S. Rainer)

C. Shaping Ministry to Be Flexible and Adaptive

[9] Many Congregations, Classes, and Denominational Ministries Are Not Sure How to Deal with the Continuous Process of Change

Today we face a process of rapid and constant change, and much of it is unrelated to previous patterns or trends. Many CRC leaders report that they are neither skilled nor prepared to lead in this setting. Many also tend to be averse to engaging conflict constructively. In interviews many leaders expressed frustration that they are aware of the need to address change but that there is also deep resistance to do so within the church at all levels.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- Many leaders are not sufficiently equipped with the core competencies and skills to lead through change or to address conflict constructively.
- Our default tends to be to seek the status quo when faced with disruptive change.
- We do not have a culture that allows for the acceptance of failure when engaging in experiments to address and face change.
- Our turn over rates on congregation councils and classes structures makes it difficult to have continuity and consistency in addressing issues of change.
- We lack sufficient biblical and theologically informed resources for addressing change and dealing with conflict.
- There is a lack of understanding the reality of organizational culture within our congregations, classes, agencies, and ministries which keeps us from being able to address this more systemic issue when dealing with continuous change.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Senior Leadership Team in Elmhurst CRC, Chicago – example of consistent leadership structure
- Crucial Conversations
- Polarity Assessment for Continuous Transformation (World Renew)

Additional Resources Available

- There are available leadership training resources such as the Willow Creek Leadership Summit – Bill Hybels, Christian Leadership Alliance, etc.
- There are available mainstream business leadership resources, esp. on change, including from social media sources, e.g. Max DePree Leadership Centre, networks with business external to the church.
- Other denominations have also had to address this and we can learn from them.

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Identify the best practices and models of leadership and administrative structures within and beyond the CRCNA that are addressing this issue of continuous change, including those from organizations beyond the church.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

2. Agencies and ministries collaborate through the MLC to provide training in the best practices of leading through change and addressing conflict and then design and make available this same training to classes and congregations.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

3. Identify the internal champions within the agencies, ministries, and related institutions who are involved in addressing continuous change and involve them in designing and implementing a process for the education and training of leaders of congregations and classes regarding the change process.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

4. Have the Executive Leadership work with the Board of Trustees and agency Boards to explore the distinctions between the role of governance and the exercise of management and then design and implement a process for building this distinction into the work of the BOT (governance) and the responsibility of Executive Leadership (management).
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

5. Have the Executive Leadership appoint a task force to reflect on how the current church order functions in churches that are experiencing continuous change and then make appropriate recommendations for changes in the church order.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

6. Have the Executive Leadership work with the BOT to develop a design for synod that would free up more time for engaging in mutual discernment in how to provide leadership for a changing church in a continuously changing context.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

In the midst of an increasing number of voices calling for change today, many of our leaders lack of skills for being able to work through the process of change. Their default is to seek to

reinforce the status quo. We do not know how to live in the midst of the on-going dynamic of continuous and adaptive change within our congregations, classes, and denomination ministries.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. Many of those involved in church planting have worked through the challenges of dealing with a continuous process of change—convene a learning community to learn from their experiences.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Convene a learning community of experienced practitioners who work in the area of continuous change with a select number of congregations and classes to listen to and learn from the issues they face in this area, and then together engage in some practices of identifying and developing biblically and theologically informed resources that address the reality of continuous change.
2. Have a task group study multi-generational family businesses of CRC members that have lasted through at least three generations, and then use what they find to design and initiate some new behaviors with a select cluster of congregations to lead into and live through systemic change.
3. Promote and utilize methodologies and resources on conflict resolution arising from change, understanding that conflict can be normal and healthy.

[10] The Operation and Sustainability of Our Centralized Ministry Delivery System Are Now in Question

Today we are hearing an urgent and increasingly important call to think more regionally and to focus more locally. Our ability to serve local congregations and remain financially sustainable as a centralized ministry delivery system is increasingly called into question. As seen from the local level, too many separate organizations in the CRC seem to be doing too many different and sometimes unrelated things. The present complex delivery system, which has developed over time like a house that has had many additions, needs to be simplified and integrated in ways that enhance partnerships and provide more efficient and effective ministry engagement.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- Responding to the call to focus on helping congregations engage in local contextual ministry will require a different approach for the agencies and ministries.
- There is a need to improve communication strategies with congregations and regions.
- We need to get better at using the available technology that allows for virtual interaction across geographical areas.
- We need to develop a staffing network at local/regional level that enables congregations to have personal and meaningful connection to denominational resources.
- We do not have a clear picture or map of how agencies and ministries are currently engaged with local congregations.
- We are not presently identifying very well the ministries congregations are doing successfully, learning from these, and finding ways to share best practices.
- At present, we are not able to adequately relate to each congregation in its unique situation and to its relationship to the whole, nor do we have sufficient ways for congregations to connect with one another, with regional ministries, and with the denomination.
- Our denominational ministry system is not sufficiently coordinated or aligned for effective engagement with local congregations.
- We lack a clear understanding of and approach to the transportation, communication, and connection issues that are related to the geography and distances experienced by our classes and congregations.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- The Network
- Home Missions regional network
- Diaconal Conference in Canada
- Some classes that are missionally retooled
- Many healthy and effective local congregations from whom others can learn
- Rich relational capital that exists in many areas that can be capitalized upon
- Ministry share system

- Global ministries that enjoy tremendous respect of other organizations
- Faith Alive customer base
- Capacity to produce high quality resources
- Strong congregations with high levels of commitment
- Strong theological identity including kingdom vision
- Our agencies have a strong history of partnering with other ministries
- Classical Renewal Ministry Team
- Campus Ministry network rooted in a strong history of campus ministry in NA
- Communities First Association
- Diaconal Ministries Canada

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Have Executive Leadership work with the MLC to manage the implementation of the Denominational Ministry Journey document that is being developed, engage in regular review of its progress, and explore collaborative ways to enhance the intended work.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
2. Conduct an assessment of each agency and ministry to determine the extent to which it is currently centralized and distributed, and then explore what adjustments might be made to enhance ministry with the local level.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
3. Continue the Collaborative Work Groups (CWGs) for agencies and ministries currently involved and bring this work into conversation with this journey document as well as the work of all the agencies and ministries.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
4. Identify congregations and classes that are cultivating creative ways to engage in distributed ministry and design ways to leverage what is learned from them throughout the system.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
5. Have Executive Leadership, MLC, and CRMT review the distributed network of CRHM's mission clusters as well as any other distributed initiative that is currently in existence, and then design and implement ways to enhance the cultivation of ministry with local level initiative in relation to all the agencies and ministries.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:
6. Utilize new technology to enhance such areas as communication, management information systems, and staff competencies.

Adaptive Ministry Challenge

Congregational life and mission is increasingly focused on local ministry which is resulting in a growing gap between local congregations and the centralized denominational ministries. We don't know how to create a different delivery system that attends well to stewarding a shared global focus while also being responsive to this local/regional focus in helping all partners to make supportive connections.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. CRHM has initiated a distributed system through its mission clusters and networks that is working in concert with its centralized role—need to review this and explore ways to bring what is helpful into the work of other agencies and ministries.
2. The Better Together initiative of the specialized ministries is providing new ways to work with classes and congregations—need to review this and explore ways to bring what is helpful into the work of other agencies and ministries..
3. CRWM is considering partnering with the agencies of two other denominations to enhance ministry in some contexts—will want to review this as it unfolds to assess what might be helpful for the work of other agencies and ministries.
4. Learn from and expand the emerging CTS seminary site in Florida to bring other classes and congregations into the process of graduate theological education.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Invite a small number of interested and willing congregations to develop a bi-national partnership with another congregation (U.S. to Canada or Canada to U.S.), with denominational staff participating to listen and learn about the sharing of resources and mutual support of ministry.
2. Invite a small number of interested and willing congregations in a particular area to form a learning community for the purpose of enhancing ministry in that area around issues in the context, with denominational staff participating to listen and learn about how best to support this ministry.
3. As part of orientation for new pastors have them spend a week in the respective national offices to familiarize them with staff and resources.

[11] We Are Not Sure How to Move into a New Financial Paradigm

Ministry-share giving has been helpfully stable over the past decade, but the older generation of givers, who tend to be most supportive of this approach, is in decline. Looking ahead, we anticipate increasing challenges associated with funding denominational ministry this way. Significant funds from planned giving will come in over the next several decades, but this income is not best matched to current operating needs. Our current strategy does not generate a sufficiently increasing revenue stream that can sustain both inflationary and ministry growth, and it is critical that our future advancement and fundraising strategy be able to do so.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to be addressed

- The deferred bequest income projected to come to some agencies and ministries will help them for about a decade, but we are not sure about how to steward the significant bequest income that is anticipated.
- We tend to make assumptions regarding what money is “there” and what money “needs to be raised, and we lack accurate and up to date information on: (1) What the trends and projections are, (2) What the giving patterns of the next generation are; and (3) What the impact of the shrinking middle class will be on giving
- We need to address the reality that the cost of ministry continues to be rising, with the cost of technology increasing.
- There are changing definitions today of what “church loyalty” means which is impacting how ministry share participation takes place.
- There is increased focus on local ministry that appears to be competing to some extent with shared denominational ministry initiatives.
- We tend to have a “one size fits all” in a changing culture—it is not working as well for us now.
- There appears to be an unwillingness to name this as an issue that needs to be addressed and to be open about engaging it.
- We do not appear to be very successful in our education and training of young people in this area.
- There seems to be a personal disconnect between the giver and the recipient in relation to much of our denominational ministry share giving.
- The churches which are faithful with Ministry Shares giving tend to receive little acknowledgement.
- CRC has become financially more diverse with a growing disparity between the wealthy and those less wealthy. The ministry share system does not adequately account for this.
- CRC has substantive ministries that have grown under a robust ministry share program, but it is not clear if these levels of ministry can be maintained.
- CRC congregations that are committed to Ministry Shares and, perhaps Christian Day Schools, struggle to adequately fund their internal programs including the staff to lead them.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Barnabas Foundation/Christian Stewardship Services
- Healthy Church Index includes stewardship
- “Together Doing More” campaign—need to do it again and follow through
- CTS students going through Crown Ministry
- Deferred given already in place and wave that is still underway
- You Add God Multiplies

Additional Resources Available

- Our loyal congregations and church members
- Our investments
- Functioning advancement teams currently exist
- Channels of communication currently exist
- Coordinated “Best Practices”

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Have the Executive Leadership appoint a task force to study organizations (denominations as well as other ministries) which have developed a new financial paradigm for supporting their ministries, and then provide recommendations from what was learned regarding how the CRC might move into a new financial paradigm.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:

2. Convene a conversation among all the development and advancement staff of the agencies and ask them to identify how best to prepare for and make a transition to a new financial paradigm which includes addressing stewardship education across the church, and then report their findings and recommendations to the Executive Leadership, MLC, and the BOT.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:

3. Identify the leading churches and local champions who are making the present system work well in all its aspects and explore ways to replicate them.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:

4. Have the Executive Leadership convene a conversation with the MLC to explore how to best plan for managing/stewarding the anticipated bequest income and then appoint a task force to make recommendations for doing so.
Convening Entity:
Participating Entities:

Adaptive Challenge Statement

Our historically-shaped strategy for funding our denominational ministries through denominational ministry shares is limited in being viable as a long-term approach. Many congregations are increasingly feeling a disconnect between the denominational ministries and their local congregational ministries. We do not know how congregational ministries and denominational ministries can and should be inter-related and funded moving forward.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. Have the Ministry Shares Team expand its work to include the design of possible new behaviors.
2. Develop an initiative with a select number of congregations to implement a scaled approach to ministry shares that is based on each congregation's budget with the adjusted rate being a percentage of the church budget. (Classis Muskegon is looking at this.)

Proposed Initiatives

1. Convene a multi-generational learning community that takes up the issue of designing a new financial paradigm and to engage in a variety of new behaviors for addressing this challenge.
2. Develop an initiative with a select number of congregations to invite them into a new paradigm for making ministry share gifts, such as a faith promise pledge, or a designation of their giving of their ministry share to denominational ministries of their choice. Utilize the learning from the 2009 Synod study report.
3. Develop an initiative with a select number of congregations that would promote a more direct connection between each congregation and the various denominational ministries.
4. Develop a learning community from churches that are in the emerging or recently organized stage.

[12] Our Denominational Ministries and Local Congregations Have Not Sufficiently Adapted to Changing Patterns of Ministry and Partnership Alignments in the Global Church

We are increasingly experiencing a new reality where persons from the populations around the globe are now our local neighbors. Historically our agencies have been quite successful in cultivating international ministry with such populations, but they are increasingly experiencing changing patterns of working in partnership with churches and agencies in those locations. In addition, many of our congregations are increasingly involved in short-term mission trips overseas, even while they continue to struggle with how best to minister in their own increasingly diverse local contexts. New configurations are required of both agencies and congregations in addressing all of these issues. (Generated by SPACT)

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- There are language issues as well as historical stereotypes which make cross-cultural ministry difficult both at home and around the world.
- The lines between what is global and what is local have become increasingly fuzzy today and this fuzziness messes with our historical patterns of creating mission and service organizations—they don't align well with the emerging patterns of ministry.
- We lack clear guidelines as well as healthy principles that provide clarity for the complex cross-cultural exchanges now taking place both for congregations and for church agencies.
- Much collaboration today occurs in multi-denominational ways where people don't always identify with a particular denomination, which is a challenge for much of our work.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- Joint work of the Mission Partner Program—has morphed into a variety of partnerships
- CRHM and its immigrant church partnerships
- CRWM increasingly brokering congregational ministry from NA with international partners
- CRHM global coffee break ministry
- World Missions and World Renew and the LEAP ministry
- Many CRC congregations host immigrant congregations
- Increasing number of CRC congregations engaging in global mission work directly
- Increasing number of global churches sponsoring and sending missionaries to work with immigrants of their tradition now living in NA

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Develop a mapping of the existing patterns of cross-cultural ministry taking place across the church both locally and globally by both agencies and congregations and then utilize this mapping to develop clearly defined principles and guidelines for agencies partnering with congregations to help them connect with their local North American contexts, and for agencies and congregations partnering with other entities internationally. (Also relates to Challenge #1)
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

2. Utilize the mapping to have CRWM and CRHM collaborate on ways to leverage ministry locally and globally with immigrants and in cross-cultural settings.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

3. Utilize the “Global Mission” stream of the five streams as a framework for World Renew, CRWM, CRHM, and BTG to partner together in rethinking and reshaping the ministries of these organizations and develop a collaborative approach where feasible. Incorporate congregations and classes into this process.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

4. Build on new technologies to enhance global connectivity.

Adaptive Challenge Statement

We now live in a world that in many ways is borderless in terms of immigration patterns and the ways for God’s people to connect with one another are changing dramatically with information technology. Our historical and current organizational arrangements do not align very well with these new realities and we have yet to figure out how to adjust to the dynamics of this changed and changing world.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. World Missions and World Renew both have initiatives that connect with churches outside of our normal ecumenical relationships. Build on these relationships for new mission engagement.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Have mission agencies suggest clear principles, learned over many years of international and national ministry that can guide churches as they expand their own reach. This will not only guide local congregations but connect them to effective networks and resources.

D. Clarifying Our Identity and Ministry Focus

[13] The Direction and Overall Focus of the CRCNA Are No Longer Clear, and Our Sense of a Shared Identity Is No Longer Self-Evident

A shared identity of the CRCNA is no longer self-evident and there is an expressed lack of clear overall direction in ministry by the denomination and its agencies and ministries. It is increasingly difficult to refer to a dominant narrative that gives direction for the church as a whole. Our theological tradition and its ready applications to service in mercy and missions at home and around the world continue to offer important contributions toward a shared purpose, but even as we are encouraged by seeing newcomers become part of this denomination, we realize that new members of the body will also need to participate in adapting that tradition. In addition, we are struggling today to address difficult and complex social issues with regard to our historical understandings of family, marriage, and human sexuality.

Technical Aspects of the Challenge

Issues to Be Addressed

- The historical markers for CRC identity of shared ethnicity, shared school experiences, and shared institutional commitments have substantially eroded in terms of providing for a shared identity.
- We have never been either mainline or evangelical and we are not sure how to identify ourselves with the continued erosion of our key markers.
- The increased focus on developing a multicultural church will require us to shift away from relying on Dutch ethnicity as a primary glue for a shared identity, and will require a significant transition within our denominational ecosystem.
- The three expressions of our theological heritage—pietist, confessional, and transformational—tend to increasingly divide us in terms of purpose in the midst of our loss of a shared identity.
- There are multiple expressions in the church today of understanding what God’s mission entails, but little shared agreement that cultivates a common sense of mission.
- We do not know how to bring local, regional, and national expressions of the church together around a shared narrative that transcends our historical identity.
- We do not have shared practices for deepening our denominational identity by engaging difficult contextual ministry issues with a variety of perspectives.
- Technological innovations are not being sufficiently utilized across the denomination for cultivating a shared identity or sense of direction.
- We lack practices methodologies that help people collaborate around a common problem or challenge in bringing a resolution.
- We lack sufficient ways for our constituents to be in genuine dialogue with denominational leaders.

- We have not been able to shape the agenda to help cultivate a shared identity or sense of sense direction.

Current Programs/Initiatives

- January series at Calvin
- SMART room – smart rooms in businesses, schools etc.
- Multi-ethnic conference and RCA Synod model
- Banner and related media,
- Network
- Footprint of specialized ministries could be expanded beyond the denomination
- DRS
- ServiceLink
- Survey information could be utilized at a higher level
- The approach by World Renew of using an Assembly of World Wide Partners could be utilized at a greater level.
- Classes Renewal Ministry Team
- Cultural Intelligence Workshops

Strategies for Initial Implementation

1. Revise and leverage agenda for synod for more strategic ends by using a consent agenda to free up more time for synod to deal with addressing the adaptive challenges facing the church. Also, conduct concurrent conferences that engage Synod in regard to specific issues, concerns, and opportunities.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
2. Have delegates to classis meetings serve more than one session in order to help ensure more continuity from meeting-to-meeting.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
3. Invite classes to spend time discussing and exploring ways to address the adaptive challenges facing the church and then have local church leaders convene the same conversation within congregations.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:
4. Convene gatherings at local, classis, national, and bi-national levels to have conversations about identity and direction of the church today, placing an emphasis on trying to discover constructive solutions.
 Convening Entity:
 Participating Entities:

Adaptive Ministry Challenge

Our history is that we tend to practice an oppositional posture toward culture and other Christians who are different from us. This tends to generate a critique of the other which keeps us from relating to them. Now that many of the things we have shared in common are eroding, we are struggling to define and live into any shared focus and direction that honors our understanding of God and our heritage. We do not know how to balance very well our emphasis on doctrine/praxis with our forming of relationships, nor do we know how to cultivate very well our participation in the catholicity of the church.

Discovering New Behaviors to Address Adaptive

Existing Initiatives

1. Build on what has already been done on an identity statement and create an effective communication/marketing plan around it.

Proposed Initiatives

1. Historically we are an immigrant denomination and now with numerous new immigrant communities coming into the church, it would be helpful to explore our earlier heritage and place this into conversation with leaders of these new communities to identify shared experiences and to help cultivate a shared identity. This will also be critical to do with established communities such as African American and Native American.
2. Utilize a case example of an actual congregation to convene conversations with a small group of interested and willing congregations to explore what CRC identity and a shared sense of ministry might look like in today's complex world.
3. Invite interested and willing classes to engage in conducting a new initiative around convening ecumenical conversations with other leaders of other denominations in their area.
4. Convene a small group of interested and willing congregations as a learning community to explore what ecumenical ministry might look like and to design new initiatives to engage in such.

Appendix A

Overview of Process

This document reports the work of the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT) to develop a *fundamentally reframed* Denominational Ministry Plan. This work was carried out between June 2012 and September 2014. The phases of this work included the following steps.

1. **Mandate by BOT to ED**—The BOT asked the ED in the winter/spring of 2012 to appoint a task force to update the Denominational Ministry Plan.
2. **Strategic Planning Task Group (SPTG) Appointed and Consultants Hired**—The ED appointed a Strategic Planning Task Group to develop the plan and contracted with The Missional Network consultants, Alan Roxburgh and Craig Van Gelder, to help facilitate the planning work.
3. **Coordinating with Other Processes**—Regular communication was maintained throughout the process with other processes taking place within the CRCNA, which included the Task Force on Review of Structure and Culture (TFRSC), the Ministry Leadership Council (MLC), and the Coordinating Work Groups (CWG).
4. **Development of an Extensive SCAN**—an extensive SCAN was compiled by the SPTG which provided an overview of both the external environment and internal life and ministry of the CRCNA along with conducting interview with a select diverse sample of CRC constituents (June-December 2012).
5. **Revised Mandate by BOT**—The BOT at its September 2012 meeting, following a presentation by the project consultants, revised the initial mandate by calling for the development of a *fundamentally reframed* Denominational Ministry Plan that could address the critical issues now facing the CRCNA.
6. **Reconstituting SPTG to become SPACT**—In light of the revised mandate, the ED reconstituted the original planning task group as the SPACT with more representation of members of the MLC.
7. **Initial Development of Key Ministry Challenges by MLC**—The narrative versions of the SCAN materials were reviewed by the executive directors of the agencies, ministries, and the administrative officers who serve on the MLC with an initial list of thirteen (13) key ministry challenges being identified (January-April 2013).
8. **Regional Church Visits to Review SCAN Materials and Name Ministry Challenges**—A comprehensive summary of the SCAN materials were compiled as a power point, with the members of SPACT teaming up in making presentations in nine (9) regions in the church, conducting both large group gatherings as well as specific focus groups for designated types of CRC constituents. Extensive feedback was collected of the naming of the key ministry challenges by those who participated (work completed between May-November 2013).

9. **Developing a Final List of Key Ministry Challenges**—SPACT compiled a final list of nineteen (19) key ministry challenges based on all feedback received and identified which of these were more technical in which were more adaptive and which were both. A total of fourteen (14) of the challenges were prioritized as needing to be addressed in a fundamentally reframed denominational ministry plan with this work being reviewed by the MLC, TFRSC, CWG, and SPACT (December 2013).
10. **Developing a Preliminary Fundamentally Reframed Denominational Ministry Plan**—SPACT partnered with the MLC in three day-long work sessions to develop an initial framing of the adaptive challenge issues as well as technical strategies for addressing each of the key ministry challenges. A revised list of thirteen challenges were further refined and sequenced. SPACT refined these draft materials into a more focused plan and then tested this preliminary draft with the BOT, TFRSC, MLC, and CWG (January-May, 2014).
11. **Finalizing the Fundamentally Reframed Denominational Ministry Plan**—SPACT field tested the preliminary plan with a number of regional focus groups and then finalized the plan based on this review and the input offered. The final plan was presented to the Executive Leadership and the BOT in September 2014.

Appendix B

Designing New Behaviors and Forming Learning Communities

Designing New Behaviors

Engaging in Adaptive Change involves designing and implementing new behaviors which invite us into a process of “behaving our way into new thinking” or what is known as “action learning.” The process of designing new behaviors involves the following:

1. State the adaptive challenge that is to be addressed.
2. Provide a brief introduction of the particular focus of the new behavior to be designed.
3. Name who is to be involved in the actual design of the new behavior.
4. Explain design of the new behavior and state the specific behavior being initiated to help participants “act their way into new thinking.”
5. Identify any resources which might be required to carry out the new behavior and how they will be secured.
6. Identify the anticipated length of the new behavior and any phases it might go through.
7. Evaluation/Reflection—by whom and when.

Forming Learning Communities

Learning communities provide a structured way to harvest the results of action learning through sustained reflection on what is being learned and further design of additional new behaviors.

Definition

A learning community is a group of people who share common experiences, responsibilities, and values who actively meet together collegially in seeking to collaboratively learn from one another to better understand as well as improve the common work in which they are engaged.

Key Characteristics

1. *Common focus around shared work*—participants are typically directly involved in the same type of work where they are seeking to provide some type of service or benefit for others.
2. *Actively collaborate*—participants openly and actively engage in discussion of and reflection on their shared work in seeking to come to common understandings, being willing to openly self-examine their own experiences.

3. *Atmosphere of trust*—shared agreements are made as to how the community will function which promote shared commitments and cultivate trust.
4. *Sustained conversation over time*—participants are committed to engaging in conversation over a sustained period of time, recognizing that deeper insights and understanding often require multiple meetings.
5. *Diversity of perspectives*—while participants usually share common work experiences, learning as a community is often enhanced with there is a range of perspectives that are present within the group.
6. *Authorized by leadership*—learning communities function best when they are clearly authorized and supported by the management leadership of the organization of which they are a part. Learning communities function best when the management leadership actively seeks to learn with and from the community.
7. *Outside assistance*—there are often times when learning communities need or can use some outside assistance either in facilitation or from persons who can offer critical reflection on what the community is working with.
8. *Focus on learning*—the key to successful learning communities is that they stay focused on learning in relation to the shared work in which they are engaged where they develop new approaches or improve their work related skills.

Appendix C

Two Ministry Challenges which Need to Be Addressed Somewhere within the Denominational System

There were two ministry challenges identified which are important to be addressed, but which seem to lie beyond what should be dealt with in a denominational ministries plan. It is recommended that these be taken up and addressed by an appropriate entity within the CRCNA as designated by the BOT or Synod.

[A] The Logic and Functioning of the Church Order No Longer Appear to Be Sufficiently Serving Their Intended Purposes in the Church

- Some feedback raised questions whether the problems of many congregations and classes struggling are related to the assumptions and logic embedded in the church order
- There are evidences of numbers of congregations and leaders no longer finding aspects of the church order relevant or helpful and tend to ignore it, especially in regard to forming leaders for ministry and forming new types of Christian communities
- The increased patter of making tweaks and adjustments to our present order may be an indicator of a need for a more systemic review

[B] The Denomination Hasn't Sufficiently Figured Out How to Cultivate Bi-National Reciprocity and Mutuality

- The ministry contexts of Canada and the U.S. are quite different demographically as well as religiously, and the CRC has not sufficiently differentiated its ministry
 - Canadian CRC church life lives as a remarkable exception within a larger secular context that has experienced substantial immigration from Asia
 - U.S. CRC church life lives between a world of declining mainline and activistic evangelicals in a context with substantial immigration from Central America and Latin America
- The regional differences across both Canada and the U.S. invite some consideration of shared regional cross-border ministry which has yet to be developed
- Staffing as well as programming for cultivating reciprocity continue to represent a challenge that is yet to be adequately addressed
- Attempts to address this issue through administrative/management personnel have not been sufficiently successful to address underlying issues

Note:

See recommendations in the report of bi-national ministry received by the Board of Trustees.

Appendix D

ORIGINAL LIST OF NINETEEN KEY MINISTRY CHALLENGES COMPILED FROM THE SCAN

The following list of nineteen (19) key ministry challenges is a summary list from: (1) reviews of the SCAN documents by the SPTG; (2) reviews of the SCAN by executive leadership of the denominational agencies and ministries in the spring of 2013; and (3) feedback from church visits conducted during fall 2013 by SPACT team members.

- ***Many Congregations Are Not Sure How to Connect/Reconnect with the Local Contexts in which They Minister***
 - Strong emphasis in SCAN and from church visits on helping local congregations engage/re-engage their ministry contexts
 - Massive demographic and cultural changes over last 50 years have dislocated many congregations within their ministry contexts
 - Significant issues to be engaged which are embedded here including: multicultural, diversity, justice, life-style differences, poverty, relationships, and listening to the “other”
 - Many of the historical values and practices of CRC church life stand in contrast to the changing context
 - There remains a strong desire to do evangelism, but there is lack of clarity regarding how to do so in today’s world

- ***Many in the Younger Generations Are Increasingly Dis-Connected from the CRC and Are Exiting***
 - The meaning of loyalty for many in these younger generations appears to be different from what many in the traditional and boomer generations have understood it to mean
 - Expressed loyalty by the younger generations to their congregations is declining, but still higher than the declining expression of loyalty to the denomination
 - Average CRC church membership is significantly older than and increasing in comparison to the general population with fewer younger families in many of our congregations than in the past
 - Significant decline in the percentage of households with school age children using Christian education—may be multiple reasons but the downward trend is clear
 - Some of the values which are more prevalent among this generation appear to be different from a number of historical CRC stances

- ***Rate of Progress of Denomination Becoming a Multicultural Church Is Insufficient both Internally and in Relation to Our Changing NA Context***
 - The world around us in NA is becoming increasingly multicultural though the patterns of diversity are different in Canada and the U.S.

- Denomination has located initiatives for addressing multicultural issues in several offices/agencies with the various roles perceived as not being well integrated or coordinated
 - For all the good work done theologically and good intent in terms of pursuing multicultural diversity, persons in the communities of color still feel substantially marginalized within denominational life
 - A significant challenge in developing a more multicultural church lies in the area of leadership development and credentialing
- ***Something Is Missing within Our Denominational Life in Regard to Discipleship, Spirituality, and Being Spirit-Led***
 - The changing cultural context of NA presents significant challenges for many congregations to cultivate practices of discipleship among their members
 - Regular emphasis in church feedback on needing to be more relational to balance out the strong historical emphasis on knowledge in regard to forming disciples
 - Concerns raised from church feedback whether our becoming more middle class to upper middle class and the wealth affect have blunted our sense of discipleship
 - Interviews as well as church feedback stressed desire for more active emphasis on cultivating spiritual life, especially in relation to prayer
 - There is a desire among many to incorporate the practice of prayerful discernment within the life of the church at all levels
 - Some emphasis regarding need to develop more understanding of and reliance on the active presence of the Spirit in our ministries
- ***We Are Not Sure How to Move into a New Financial Paradigm***
 - Ministry Share giving has been helpfully stable over the past decade but the older generation of givers are now in their later years of life
 - Feedback from congregations indicate that having sufficient finances in the future in terms of supporting denominational ministry will be difficult
 - There is significant fund raising on deferred giving that has already been secured by some agencies and ministries to supplement ministry share income, but this is not shared proportional to current budgets among all the agencies and ministries
 - The deferred bequest income projected to come to some agencies and ministries will help them for about a decade, raising questions regarding how to best steward these resources, but also raising questions regarding how to plan for living on the other side of this additional income
- ***Direction and Overall Focus of the CRCNA Are No Longer Clear***
 - Tied to feedback on lack of clear identity were additional comments regarding a seeming lack of clear direction in ministry by the denomination
 - Feedback from church visits indicated that there was no longer a dominant narrative that gives direction for the church as a whole
 - Our historical practice of having an “over against” posture to other churches and in some ways to the world is no longer serving us

- Our theological tradition has offered and continues to offer an important contribution toward a shared purpose, but will likely require allowing those who have joined the CRC to own and give voice to that tradition
 - The three expressions of our theological heritage—pietist, confessional, and transformational—tend to increasingly divide us in terms of purpose in the midst of our loss of a shared identity
 - There are multiple expressions of understanding what God’s mission entails, but little shared agreement that cultivates a common sense of mission
- ***The Present Operation and Sustainability of Our Centralized Ministry Delivery System Are Now in Question***
 - One important emphasis in the church feedback and SCAN interviews was the need to think regionally and focus locally
 - The limits of the centered ministry delivery system are becoming increasingly evident in terms of:
 - Ability to serve the congregations at the local level
 - Financial sustainability
 - Challenge of integrating the work of the multiple agencies and ministries
 - Responding to the call for focusing on helping congregations engage in local contextual ministry will likely require a different approach
 - Feedback from church visits regarding current ministry delivery system indicate:
 - There appears to be too many separate organizations trying to do too many different and sometimes seemingly unrelated things
 - The complex system that developed over time needs to be simplified
- ***Congregations Ministering in their Local Contexts Need to Be a Key Focus of Denominational Ministry***
 - Strong emphasis in SCAN interviews and feedback from church visits that stresses the need for the denomination to focus on partnering with congregations in ministering in their local contexts
 - Continuous theme in SCAN and feedback of thinking “local” and focusing on congregations
 - Significant disconnect many congregations feel from the denomination agencies, ministries, and executive leadership—historically strong loyalty is eroding and the value of supporting shared ministry is declining
- ***Many Congregations, Classes, and Denominational Ministries Are Not Sure How to Deal with the Issue of the Process of Change***
 - Many of our current leaders express that they are not skilled in or prepared to lead in this area
 - Many of our current leaders tend to be adverse to engaging conflict constructively
 - There is an expressed frustration in the SCAN interviews that they are aware of the need to address change but that there are deep resistances to do so within the church at all levels

- ***We Presently Lack Any On-Going Process of Convening and Listening with CRC Members, Congregations, and Classes***
 - We have not adequately cultivated practices and patterns of reflective learning within our ministries as part of our way of working together
 - Our practice has been to engage in processes of convening and listening when the agencies and ministries have an agenda regarding something they want/need to do
 - Agencies and ministries have a history of leading within the denomination by providing programs which address needs or providing answers for perceived or actual questions

- ***Structure, Purposes, Ministry, and Leadership of Classes Are No Longer Working Like They Once Did and Many Classes Are Under Stress***
 - SCAN indicates that many classes do not appear to function well in terms of being able to initiate and support regional ministry among their congregations
 - The classical renewal initiative was helpful for a time but required significant investment of time and energy and was difficult to maintain in the midst of leadership transition
 - Increased concern among classical leaders such as stated clerks regarding the decline of energy, interest, and leadership investment in the work of classis
 - Church feedback was mixed by geography—some classes appear to be working okay but many are not

- ***Lay Leadership Is Under-Emphasized and Clergy Formation Processes Are Inadequate for Engaging the Challenges Before the Denomination***
 - There is increased awareness of the challenges congregations are facing in forming lay leaders
 - There is a need to develop more multicultural leadership across the church and while what we've done in the past is helpful, it is not sufficient to address the larger need
 - There is still a significant challenge present within the church to cultivate and use the gifts of women in leadership roles
 - Regular feedback from church visits regarding need to form leaders who can lead in today's challenging and changing context—many present leaders not perceived as being able to do so

- ***The Denomination Hasn't Sufficiently Figured Out How to Cultivate Bi-National Reciprocity and Mutuality***
 - The ministry contexts of Canada and the U.S. are quite different demographically as well as religiously, and the CRC has not sufficiently differentiated its ministry
 - Canadian CRC church life lives as a remarkable exception within a larger secular context that has experienced substantial immigration from Asia
 - U.S. CRC church life lives between a world of declining mainline and activist evangelicals in a context with substantial immigration from Central America and Latin America

- The regional differences across both Canada and the U.S. invite some consideration of shared regional cross-border ministry which has yet to be developed
 - Staffing as well as programming for cultivating reciprocity continue to represent a challenge that is yet to be adequately addressed
 - Attempts to address this issue through administrative/management personnel have not been sufficiently successful to address underlying issues
- ***There Is a Lack of Capacity to Identify, Celebrate, Innovate and Learn From Creative and Flexible Approaches to Ministry***
 - The rapidly changing context is requiring congregations to be more creative and flexible in pursuing local ministry, but taking risks has not been a high value in CRC church life
 - Denominational programming for congregations is perceived as having operated from a practice of one size fits all
 - The ecclesiastical structure of the church order appears to have constraints in being able to be creative and flexible in partnering with congregations to help them engage in ministry in their local contexts
 - Feedback from some churches indicated that there is a consistent and fairly deep resistance to change in many congregations
 - The technology that is available to help foster creativity and flexibility are currently underutilized
- ***A Shared Identity of the CRCNA Is No Longer Self-Evident***
 - SCAN materials indicate that many denominations are struggling today with this issue in our rapidly changing context
 - The historical markers for CRC identity of shared ethnicity, shared school experiences, and shared institutional commitments have substantially been eroded in terms of providing for a shared identity
 - Feedback from church visits regularly commented on lack of clear identity today being a major challenge
 - The increased focus on developing a multicultural church requires a shift away from relying on Dutch ethnicity as a primary glue for a shared identity—would require a significant transition in our denominational ecosystem
 - We have never been either mainline or evangelical, and now not sure how to identify ourselves with the erosion of our key markers
- ***Many Who've Joined the CRC Are Expressing a Lack of their Being a More Participatory and Relational Culture***
 - The traditional CRC culture has tended to value theological content while practicing hierarchical authority
 - Many in the communities of color highly value the theology but are also calling for a more participatory church that cultivates relationships

- Many in the millennial generation place a value on there being a participatory and relational culture
- Perception regularly expressed that denomination is too hierarchical and bureaucratic
- The majority of pastors have not been trained for a relational style of ministry

- ***The Logic and Functioning of the Church Order No Longer Appear to Be Sufficiently Serving Their Intended Purposes in the Church***
 - Some raised questions whether the problems of many congregations and classes struggling are related to the assumptions and logic embedded in the church order
 - There are evidences of numbers of congregations and leaders no longer finding aspects of the church order relevant or helpful and tend to ignore it, especially in regard to forming leaders for ministry and forming new types of Christian communities
 - The increased patter of making tweaks and adjustments to our present order may be an indicator of a need for a more systemic review

- **We Seem to Lack Sufficient Capacity to Listen to and Learn from the “Other” within the Contexts in which We Minister**
 - The overwhelming majority of responses to the external SCAN was to read them as negative rather than presenting opportunities for expanded ministry
 - We are in need of being able to see ourselves from the “outside in” if we are going to engage well our changing context
 - It will be a challenge to break out of our tendency to circle the wagons unless we can develop genuine relationships with the “other” and learn from them
 - Our defaults to try and solve things on our own terms kick in way to quickly when confronting new realities and challenges from the culture

- ***Significant Challenges Today Are Being Experienced in Denomination in Regard to Historical Understandings of Family, Marriage, and Human Sexuality***
 - There is a growing gap between the broader secular cultures in NA and the historical values that the CRC has placed on family, marriage, and human sexuality
 - Concerns expressed in feedback from churches regarding how to hold on to our historical values in these areas and yet reach persons in the secular culture
 - There appears to be a growing diversity within the CRC regarding views toward family, marriage, and human sexuality
 - Feedback from churches continuously raised questions regarding how to minister with and to singles
 - There are increased challenges associated with congregations struggling to minister to non-traditional households and families