

You add.  
God multiplies.

## Funding Ministry Innovation

**W**hat happens when you invest in ministry? That's a question Jeff Bolt, director of advancement for the Christian Reformed Church, explores every day. As part of his duties, Bolt oversees the CRC Foundation in the United States.

The developmental ministry fund of the CRC Foundation in the U.S. and Canada has been known by many names over the years—first as the Fellowship Fund, then as the CRC Foundation, later as the Catalyst Fund, and now as Ignite: Funding Ministry Innovation. Its purpose, however, has remained the same—to join CRC members together in financially supporting innovative ministries and initiatives.

“Ignite is a venture capital fund for ministry,” Bolt explained. “It provides agencies and ministries, as well as local churches and classes, with the ability to start something new without having to sacrifice funding for current ministry programs.”

The idea behind Ignite is to create ways to resource new ministry ideas and initiatives.

“Ministry today is different from ministry 20 years ago, and ministry 20 years from now will look different from ministry today,” said Bolt. “Ignite bridges the funding gap between ministry today and ministry tomorrow.”

To help cultivate new ministry ideas, Ignite provides seed money for ministry innovation.

In Ethiopia, for example, Pastor Grima, a local pastor, is shepherding a group of 79 young people and helping them live more godly lives. Nearby, Pastor Berhanu has been reaching out to unbelievers in his community, offering them meals and spiritual comfort in times of need. Both of these pastors cite training they received from the Timothy



**Pastor Grima credits the Timothy Leadership Training Institute, which received seed money from Ignite, for helping him succeed in his ministry with 79 young people in Ethiopia.**

Leadership Training Institute (TLTI) as being essential for equipping them for this type of ministry. Ignite (then known as the CRC Foundation) was a partner in helping to seed TLTI 10 years ago.

Funds from Ignite are not limited to international ministry, however. They can also be accessed for ministry initiatives that help local congregations.

During the spring of 2015, the CRC's Faith Formation Ministries used monies from Ignite and a local classis (a regional group of churches) to launch a pilot program called “the Canadian

Youth Ministry Project.” The focus of the project was to equip youth leaders in Canada to do their work in more meaningful ways through webinars, blogs, Facebook posts, events, retreats, and regional gatherings. If effective, the lessons learned from this pilot project in Canada can be replicated across North America.

Steve van Breda, director of youth ministries at Exeter Christian Reformed Church in Ontario, says the Canadian Youth Ministry Project has helped him better understand what it means to be engaged in youth ministry.

“I am discovering that it is much deeper than just the kids,” he said. “It leads seamlessly into faith formation as a church body.”

Van Breda says the support he's received from the project has “been invaluable.”

Over the past 20 years, Ignite has invested more than \$9 million to fund 85 different ministry ideas, church plants, and leadership initiatives.

“If you are involved in ministry at any level, I encourage you to learn more about Ignite and how it can be used to foster innovation for God's kingdom work,” said Bolt. ■

—by CRC Communications