





AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2005

June 11-18, 2005
Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel
Trinity Christian College
Palos Heights, Illinois

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Synod 2005 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 11, at 9:00 a.m. in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. Rev. Sam Hamstra, Jr., minister of Palos Heights CRC, Palos Heights, Illinois, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 2005 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. There will be an orientation meeting for first-time delegates and advisers Friday evening, June 10, 2005, at 7:30 p.m. The location of the orientation meeting will be announced at the registration desk.

A Service of Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 12, 2005, at 3:00 p.m. in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College. Rev. Hamstra will officiate at this service.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 5 and 12. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

As this agenda is being prepared for print, Dr. David Engelhard, general secretary of the CRC is on medical leave for the treatment of a malignant brain tumor. Dr. Engelhard began the process of preparing this agenda but was unable to complete it before his medical leave began. At this time, it is unknown whether his recovery will be sufficient to be present at Synod 2005. The prayers of the church are requested for both David and Jeanne Engelhard.

Peter Borgdorff
Executive Director of Ministries
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

I. Note to delegates

A. Delegates who travel by car are urged to carpool, if possible, to save on travel costs.

B. Plane travel is the most economical for delegates traveling long distances to synod because it eliminates lodging and meal expenses en route. Synod will pay the lower amount of the cost of airfare for one round trip or the cost of driving with the reimbursement rate of 40.5 cents per mile for U.S. delegates and 45 cents per kilometer for Canadian delegates.

C. Synod provides accidental death and dismemberment insurance (up to \$125,000) for delegates to synod. While there are exclusions and restrictions identified in the policy, travel and activities that are related to participation in synod are covered. Synod does not provide health insurance. Canadian delegates may wish to review their policies and purchase additional health insurance for the time they are at synod if their present policies do not provide adequate insurance outside of Canada.

D. Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the Agenda for Synod 2005 and all supplementary materials.

E. Please direct any questions regarding synod to the office of the general secretary by calling 616-224-0744.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2005 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

Synod 1954 stated that “the very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not ‘report’” (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15). If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, privately, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16).

III. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not taped. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being

taped. Synod has designated that the office of the general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1989 concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions by media representatives and visitors:

A. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.

B. *Visitor privileges*

1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).
2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Videotaping is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).

(*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 445)

IV. **Proposed daily schedule**

Synod 2000 adopted several recommendations regarding the scheduling of future synods in a one-week format. Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule is tentatively in place for Synod 2005:

<i>Friday orientation</i>	
7:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Orientation for first-time delegates and advisers
<i>Opening Saturday</i>	
9:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Opening session of synod Election of officers Finalization of committee assignments
11:00 – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch and orientation of committee chairpersons and reporters
1:15 – 3:00 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
3:00 – 3:20 p.m.	Break
3:20 – 5:30 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
<i>Sunday</i>	
3:00 p.m.	Synodical worship service
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 – 9:30 p.m.	Gospel Celebration followed by an Open House at The Back to God Hour Offices and Ice Cream Social

Monday

8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 – 9:15 a.m.	Brief plenary session
9:15 – 11:45 a.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 – 5:00 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings

Tuesday – Friday

8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 – 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 – 5:00 p.m.	Plenary session
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Plenary session

Saturday

8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 – 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
(Final adjournment by 11:45 a.m.)	

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2005

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Russell J. Graff	Ministers Ronald E. Klok
	John A. Ooms	Arthur L. Verboon
Elders	William Vanden Born	Elders Kristopher J. Ooms
	Peter G. Jonkman	Douwe Spruiensma
Alberta South		
Ministers	Edward Jager	Ministers J. Cameron Fraser
	Philip F. Reinders	H. Charles Kooger
Elders	Mike Wind	Elders John Veltkamp
	Ron Buschman	Peter Delleman
Arizona		
Ministers	James A. Hildebrandt	Ministers Robert Walter, Jr.
	Ray P. De Lange	_____
Elders	Ken Rindels	Elders Jose Rayas
	Eduardo A. Gonzalez	Rodney J. Hugen
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Kenneth J. Nydam	Ministers Chris P. Mitchell
	Edward H. Gerber	James L. Vande Lune
Elders	Jan R. Huussen	Elders Martin Van De Weert
	Kenneth Prol	_____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Hilbrent Van der Heide	Ministers Wout Brouwer
	Darren G. Colyn	Peter L. Vander Beek
Elders	William J.N. Crofton	Elders Aren Bakker
	Jacob E. Colyn	_____
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Andrew G. Vander Leek	Ministers _____
	Kenneth D. Boonstra	_____
Elders	August Bremer	Elders _____
	John Fictorie	_____
California South		
Ministers	Tong K. Park	Ministers Donald W. Lagerwey
	David Chong	William Verhoef
Elders	Benton J. Mulder	Elders Steve Paulos
	Richard H. Boonstra	_____
Central California		
Ministers	George G. Vink	Ministers Gerard L. Dykstra
	Bruce A. Persenaire	Paul H. Vander Klay
Elders	Lambert Veldstra	Elders Willie Bylsma
	Paul W. Whatley, Sr.	James I. Grasley

Classis	Delegates	Alternates	
Chatham			
Ministers	Richard J. deLange Vic Vandermolen	Ministers	Robert W. Hogendoorn Thomas S. Baird
Elders	John Eising George H. Douma	Elders	_____ _____
Chicago South			
Ministers	Robert J. Price Gerry G. Van Dam	Ministers	John M. Ouwinga Julius T. Medenblik
Elders	Roger C. Lefers Richard Fennema	Elders	Gary Meyer _____
Columbia			
Ministers	D. Vance Hays William S. Wilton	Ministers	Donald L. Recker Jelmer P. Groenewold
Elders	Walt Wierenga Ivan R. Imig	Elders	John W. Vander Beek David A. Hitt
Eastern Canada			
Ministers	Gary Van Leeuwen Benjamin J. Ponsen	Ministers	Robert D. Boertje Jacob H. Boer
Elders	Gerrit Tenyenhuis Mike Van Dyke	Elders	Jacob Rook Jean J. Lauxiere
Georgetown			
Ministers	Terry L. Genzink David E. Den Haan	Ministers	Stephen R. Steenstra Gregory S. Janke
Elders	Dale Boeve Melvin Vander Bie	Elders	_____ _____
Grand Rapids East			
Ministers	Peter M. Jonker George F. Vander Weit	Ministers	Jack Kooreman James E. Blankespoor
Elders	Peter P. De Boer Wesley J. Febus	Elders	Edward L. Hoeksema _____
Grand Rapids North			
Ministers	Henry Admiraal Brian P. Bosscher	Ministers	Charles L. Geschiere Edward J. Blankespoor
Elders	Donald Oosterhouse Daryl Vogel	Elders	John A. Fynewever _____
Grand Rapids South			
Ministers	David J. Deters Stanley P. Mast	Ministers	Ronald L. Fynewever Randall C. Raak
Elders	Randall S. Ledeboer John De Jager	Elders	James B. Dykstra Dean Van Bruggen
Grandville			
Ministers	Daniel B. Mouw David L. Jolman	Ministers	Douglas A. Kamstra L. Kevin Stieva
Elders	Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr. Henry J. Koetje	Elders	_____ _____
Greater Los Angeles			
Ministers	Thomas P. Doorn J. Daniel Mendez	Ministers	Jonathan J. Kim Norberto E. Wolf
Elders	Francisco Golon Francis N. Kredit	Elders	Randall D. Boer _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Hackensack		
Ministers	Andrew K. Chun	MinistersBrent A. Pennings
	Joel E. Kok	Kyuboem Lee
Elders	Steve Jefferson	EldersEd Smith
	Joshua D. Amazaechi	David L. Vander Hart
Hamilton		
Ministers	Gordon H. Pols	MinistersJohn H. Bouwers
	Kevin P. De Raaf	James E. Pot
Elders	Cornelis Visser	EldersDick L. Kranendonk
	Homer W. Lensink	Arie G. Van Eek
Heartland		
Ministers	Timothy J. Ouwinga	MinistersGreg R. Dyk
	Nathan de Vries	Kevin J. Muyskens
Elders	Ervin L. Hibma	EldersSylvan Byker
	Robert Wiersma	
Holland		
Ministers	H. David Schuringa	MinistersDouglas R. Fauble
	Wayne A. Brouwer	Jack B. Dik
Elders	Jack Berghoef	EldersGus Van Den Berge
	Ray Schrotenboer	
Hudson		
Ministers	Jack Wilson	MinistersCraig E. Broek
	Oh Kyung Kwon	Peter A. Hoytema
Elders	Everett J. Faber	EldersDavid Lowe
	Clarence A. Knyfd	
Huron		
Ministers	Edward Den Haan	MinistersChristopher J. Schievink
	William F. Hoogland	Jacob M. Van de Hoef
Elders	Jack Tacoma	EldersMenno Eelkema
	Stan Puklicz	Henry Exel
Iakota		
Ministers	Bernard J. Haan, Jr.	MinistersDonald W. Cowart
	Clifford Hoekstra	Herman Van Nijenhuis
Elders	Nathan L. Hitchcock	Elders_____
	Doug Kooima	_____
Illiana		
Ministers	Herman J. Schutt	MinistersRandall R. Bergsma
	Gerald L. Hoek	Joel W. Zuidema
Elders	Donald Dykstra	EldersJohn Faber
	Harley D. Ver Beek	Bernie Smit
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Hendrik De Vries	MinistersJoseph A. Brinks
	Loren J. Kotman	Robert L. Boersma
Elders	Louis J. Meinema	Elders_____
	Kenneth R. Slager	_____
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Kenneth M. Vander Horst	MinistersEmmett A. Harrison
	Peter Choi	Harry R. Winters
Elders	Theo Verbeek	EldersArlyn Bossenbrook
	Maurice A. Veenstra	_____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Superior		
Ministers	L. Bryce Mensink	MinistersHenry G. Gunnink
	Mark Brouwer	Richard Zekveld
Elders	Don Muilenburg	EldersRandy Hedman
	Don Wieberdink	Walter Van Eps
Minnkota		
Ministers	Timothy J. Brown	MinistersJoseph Vanden Akker
	Gerrit Besteman	LeRoy G. Christoffels
Elders	Verl E. Hieb	EldersDaniel C. Schnyders
	Henry De Kruif	Kurt D. Huiskens
Muskegon		
Ministers	Alvin L. Hoksbergen	MinistersEdward C. Visser
	Steven J. Datema	Larry D. Baar
Elders	John A. Frens	Elders_____
	Hendrik Grashuis	_____
Niagara		
Ministers	Derek Bouma	MinistersRobert J. Loerts
	Walter H. Vanderwerf	Andrew E. Beunk
Elders	John TeBrake	EldersDick Verburg
	Sylvan E. Gerritsma	Bruce Zantingh
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	George M. McGuire	MinistersThomas J. Niehof
	Matthew D. Ooms	Thomas J. Vos
Elders	William N. DeKruyff	Elders_____
	Ronald Klaasen	_____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	James E. Wolff	MinistersDavid R. Armstrong
	Timothy H. Douma	Juan Flores
Elders	Richard Brander	EldersJack G. Wiersum
	Daniel J. Sullivan	_____
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Thomas A. De Does	MinistersPeter R. Byma
	Carl J. Afman	Robert D. Drenten
Elders	John Rozeveld	EldersDon L. Boes
	Carl Veenstra	_____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Paul K. Im	MinistersSeung Jai Kang
	Benjamin ByungJae Jeong	_____
Elders	Soo Hyun Park	EldersJin Choi
	Ki Hyun Oh	_____
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Timothy B. Toeset	MinistersMichael J. Kooy
	Rob W. Jansons	Mark A. Van Haitisma
Elders	Don L. Korthuis	EldersEric Likkel
	Dae-Shik Kim	Il Hyun Nam
Pella		
Ministers	John Gorter	MinistersGideon E. Wamala
	Sheldon Starkenberg	Jack M. Gray
Elders	Jerry L. Uitermarkt	EldersRobert E. Van Soelen
	Ernest L. De Jong	Ken Rozenboom

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	B. Bernard Bakker Michael F. Miedema	Ministers Jake Kuipers Ed W. Visser
Elders	John Struyk Jim Van Halteren	Elders Marten Van Harmelen Hans VanManen
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Raymond Slim Bobby Boyd	Ministers William J. Kempkes W. Keith Bulthuis
Elders	Caleb N. Dickson Willie J. Bennally	Elders Randy L. Freeland Edward T. Begay
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	Kenneth R. Rip Thomas D. Draayer	Ministers Roger A. Bouwman Roger De Young
Elders	Dick J. Katte Anthony Begay	Elders Kenton J. Bruxvoort David B. Schaafsma
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Scott Vander Ploeg Hector Garcia	Ministers Lawrence J. Howerzyl Gianni Gracia
Elders	Henry Perez Jack VanDerSlik	Elders John LeJeune Walter Portillo
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Milton R. Doornbos David D. Poolman	Ministers Daniel J. Steen Ben J. Ridder
Elders	Harry L. Holwerda Richard N. Wattez	Elders Ray Bruinius George W. Hyslop
Toronto		
Ministers	Hendrik P. Bruinsma Jacob Kerkhof	Ministers Nick C. Overduin Erick J. Schuringa
Elders	Ronald Vance Willem Ubbens	Elders George Vandervelde
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Glenn O. Gerdes Jeffrey J. Brower	Ministers Leslie J. Kuiper Edward J. Laarman
Elders	Rob Buikema Ed Homan	Elders Jerry Heinon
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Jack A. Huttinga Randall Van Osdol	Ministers Thomas Vander Ziel Wilfred Gesch
Elders	George E. Kent Ben De Vries	Elders Marv Kaptein
Zeeland		
Ministers	William J. Renkema Marc A. Nelesen	Ministers Paul Ed. Bakker Jack Vander Plate
Elders	Del Arendsen Ron Bergman	Elders Bill De Kleine Robert Bosch

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Joint-Ministries Management Committee

Christian Reformed Church in North America-Michigan Corporation
Christian Reformed Church in North America-Canada Corporation
Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 2004 and Synod 2005.

I. Introduction

A. General

The governing Board of the Christian Reformed Church is organized as two legal entities, one in Michigan and one in Canada. Together these legal entities form the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) and are known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The mandate given by synod to the Board is found in its constitution and bylaws, which were revised and approved at Synod 2001 (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 519).

The Board has met two times since Synod 2004 (September and February) and is scheduled to meet again in May. At its meetings, the Board organizes its work around matters of polity, program, and finance. Polity matters often arise from assignments given to the Board by a previous synod as well as the work associated with the office of the general secretary. Program and finance matters often arise out of the ministries of the agencies and the work associated with the office of the executive director of ministries.

The Executive Committee of the Board meets as needed. Canadian trustees meet separately to consider Canadian issues. This arrangement complies with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities and provides a helpful way to consider and recommend solutions to issues unique to the Canadian churches.

Though the Board deals with many ecclesiastical matters as well as required corporate issues, a central focus of its work is to enhance the ministries of the whole church, especially those that are carried on through the agencies of the CRC. It is a privilege to see how many wonderful ministries the Lord is pleased to accomplish through the membership and organizations of the CRC. The work of education, relief and development, radio and TV, care and compassion, and missions at home and abroad have been blessed by God.

The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the whole church in these challenging times.

B. Membership

The members of the Board from the United States are Mr. Dan Cooke (Region 12), Mr. Paul Dozeman (member-at-large), Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra (Region 6), Mrs. Gail F. Jansen (member-at-large), Mr. Kenneth Kuipers (Region 10), Rev. W. Wayne Leys (Region 9), Rev. Al Machiela (Region 5), Mrs. Sari Mills (member-at-large), Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (Region 11), Mrs. N. Theresa Rottschafer (Region 7), Rev. Robert J. Timmer (Region 8), Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen (Region 11), Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee (Region 10), Mr. Marion D. Van Soelen (Region 8), and Mrs. Beverly A. Weeks (Region 11).

The members of the Board from Canada are Rev. Andrew Beunk (Niagara), Mrs. Sarah Cook (member-at-large), Mr. William Crofton (B.C. North-West), Rev. Edward Den Haan (Huron), Mr. Jack Geschiere (Chatham), Mr. Hessel Kielstra (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Rev. Jake Kuipers (Quinte), Mr. Enno Meijers (Toronto), Mr. Keith Oosthoek (member-at-large), Rev. John Pasma (Alberta North), Rev. Bert Slofstra (B.C. South-East), Rev. William C. Tuininga (Lake Superior), Mrs. Patricia Storteboom (member-at-large), Rev. Paul Vanderkooy (Eastern Canada), and Rev. Bart Velthuisen (Hamilton).

The general secretary (Dr. David H. Engelhard) and the executive director of ministries (Dr. Peter Borgdorff) serve ex officio as corporate trustees and members of the Board of Trustees.

1. Board officers: Rev. W.W. Leys, president; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, secretary; Rev. B. Slofstra, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers: Rev. W.W. Leys, president; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. P. Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, treasurer; Mr. John H. Bolt, director of finance and support services.
3. Executive Committee: Mrs. S. Cook; Rev. G.L. Dykstra; Mrs. G.F. Jansen; Rev. J. Kuipers; Rev. W.W. Leys, chair; Rev. B. Slofstra. Dr. D.H. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff serve ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
19	1	3rd
18	3	3rd

Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA 2004-2005 SALARYGRADE AND RANGE STRUCTURE

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$83,581	\$104,477	\$125,371	\$107,664	\$134,580	\$161,496
19	\$76,045	\$95,055	\$114,067	\$93,401	\$116,751	\$140,102
18	\$69,696	\$87,120	\$104,543	\$81,385	\$101,732	\$122,078
17	\$64,340	\$80,426	\$96,510	\$71,249	\$89,062	\$106,875
16	\$59,858	\$74,821	\$89,786	\$62,766	\$78,457	\$94,149
15	\$56,101	\$70,127	\$84,152	\$55,657	\$69,571	\$83,485
14	\$49,245	\$61,556	\$73,867	\$49,650	\$62,061	\$74,473
13	\$43,495	\$54,368	\$65,241	\$44,604	\$55,755	\$66,907

Note: The shaded areas are not currently in use.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the Board has ratified the following appointments made by classes:

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Alberta South/ Saskatchewan		Rev. Andrew Joosse Rev. Frederick Walhof	
	Arizona			
	B.C. North-West	Rev. Henry Numan		2007(1)
	B.C. South-East	Rev. Henry Jonker	Rev. Alvin Beukema	2007(1)
	Hudson	Rev. Kenneth J. Verhulst	Rev. Mark Lucas	2007(1)
	Illiana		Rev. Stephen R. Van Eck	
	Kalamazoo	Rev. Hendrik De Vries	Rev. Ken Baker	2008(1)
	Lake Superior		Rev. Dale Visser	
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. Soo Hyun Park	Rev. Seung J. Kang	2007(1)
	Pella	Rev. Jack Gray	Rev. Jeff Sajack	2007(1)
	Zeeland	Rev. Gerry G. Heyboer	Rev. De Young	2008(1)
World Missions	Chatham	Mr. Martin Poolman		2007(1)
	Illiana		Rev. James La Grand	
	Lake Superior		Mr. Lester Brown	
	Minnkota		Rev. Timothy Brown	

2. Classes that have declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 1995, the general secretary keeps a list of those classes that declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, the following classes have adopted a decision to declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North	Kalamazoo
Arizona (deacons only)	Lake Erie
British Columbia North-West	Muskegon
British Columbia South-East	Niagara
Chatham	Northern Illinois
Chicago South	Pacific Northwest
Grand Rapids East	Quinte
Greater Los Angeles	Red Mesa
Hackensack	Rocky Mountain
Holland	Southeast U.S.
Huron	Toronto
Hudson	

3. Ethnic advisers to synod

The position of ethnic adviser was approved by Synod 1995 and reaffirmed by Synod 2000. Ethnic advisers first served at Synod 1996.

Guidelines for the position were approved by Synod 1996 and incorporated into the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

The Board has appointed the following ethnic advisers for Synod 2005:

Ms. Sari Mills
Mr. Tim Nyugen
Mr. Chris Pullenayegem

Note: The Board will appoint additional women advisers at its May meeting.

4. Board nominations

a. Regional members

Whenever a new Board of Trustees member is needed from a region or when a member's first term is completed, each classis in the region is requested to submit or approve names for the position. When a slate has been prepared by the Board, the nominations are forwarded to synod for election. All first-term elections are from a slate of two nominees and all second-term elections are from a slate of single nominees (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, D, 2).

The following slates of names from various geographic regions are coming to synod for election of a first term:

Classis Huron

Mr. Jack Tacoma, a member of New Life CRC in Guelph, Ontario, is a professional engineer. He has served as chair of the local school board and as chair of consistory. Mr. Tacoma currently is the chair of the classical interim committee, the chair of the advisory council of the Eastern Canada Leadership Development Network, the secretary of the classis ministry committee, and the chair of consistory. He also serves on the regional resource team for Home Missions, and is a church visitor and a coach with Natural Church Development. Mr. Tacoma is licensed to exhort.

Mr. Gary VanArragon, a member of New Life CRC in Guelph, Ontario, is a high school principal. He has served as a delegate to synod and has served on the board of directors of John Calvin Christian School and the board of trustees of Redeemer University College. He currently serves as an elder and is on the board of directors of Woodland Christian High School.

Classis Lake Superior (Canadian congregations) (alternate only)

Rev. Evert Busink is pastor of First CRC, Brandon, Manitoba. He has served on the board of Christian Reformed Home Missions, as a stated clerk of classis, and as a delegate to synod. He currently serves as a regional pastor, as a church visitor, as a peer learning coordinator, and as a member of the classical Home Missions committee.

The following slates of names from various geographic regions are coming to synod for election to a second term:

Region 6 (to be reported in the supplementary report)

Region 7

Mrs. N. Theresa Rottschaffer (incumbent), a member of Maranatha Fellowship CRC, Farmington, New Mexico, is an elementary school teacher. She is a graduate of Calvin College and received her master's degree from Northern Arizona University. She has served on the CRC Publications Board.

Mr. Walter F. Ackerman (alternate), a member of Crestview CRC, Boulder, Colorado, is a revenue agent for the Colorado Department of Revenue. He is a graduate of Calvin College and received his master's degree from the University of Colorado. He has served on the Denver Deaconal Foundation Board and on the Boulder Shelter of the Homeless Board. He has served numerous times as elder and deacon, and he presently serves as stated clerk of Classis Rocky Mountain.

Region 8

Mr. Marion D. Van Soelen (incumbent), a member of Hope CRC, Hull, Iowa, is a district coordinator-director for Christian Schools International. He has served twice as a delegate to synod, on the CSI International board, and on the local hospital board. He has served as elder three times and as chair of his church's pastor search committee. He presently serves on the synodical Committee to Study Church Education and is a catechism teacher.

Mr. Lane Bonnema (alternate), a member of First CRC, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is a team leader of the executive response team for Gateway Computers and a former school teacher and administrator. He has a master's degree in education and administration. He has served as a delegate to synod two times and as elder and catechism teacher numerous times.

Region 11

Mrs. Beverly A. Weeks (incumbent), a member of Oakwood CRC, Belding, Michigan, is a homemaker. She attended Grand Rapids Junior College and Butterworth School of Nursing. She has served as director of Oakwood CRC Coffee Break; as secretary-treasurer of Faith Community Christian School Boosters Club; and as a member of outreach, worship, and property committees.

Mrs. Kathy Steenwyk (alternate), a member of Grace CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a secretary at Potter's House Christian High School. She attended Reformed Bible College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has served as an elder.

Region 12

Mr. Dan Cooke (incumbent), a member of New Hope Community CRC, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is a partner in Omega Engineering Consultants and a part-time high school computer teacher. He is a graduate of Calvin College and received a master's degree from Nova University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He has served as an elder, Sunday school teacher, and Bible study leader. He also has served as a member of the Home Missions Board and executive committee, and on various classical committees. He presently serves as stated clerk of Classis Southeast U.S.

Mr. Cornelius J. Bushoven (alternate), a member of Cedar Hill CRC, Wyckoff, New Jersey, is a retired CPA. He is a graduate of Pace University and Rutgers University. He has served as treasurer of The Back to God Hour Board, chair of the Christian Health Care Center Board, and vice president and president of the Eastern Christian School Board. He has served as vice president of council and two terms as elder.

Chatham

Mr. Jack Geschiere (incumbent), a member of Second CRC, Sarnia, Ontario, is a retired terminal operator and safety inspector for Shell Canada. He has served six terms as elder and has served as church visitor and as a classical Home Missions committee member. He has served as a delegate to the Home Missions Board, serving on its executive committee and two years as its vice president; as president of the Canadian Home Missions Board; and as a member of the Home Missions educational task force for the restructure of funding for the Christian school system in Rehoboth. He has been a delegate to synod four times.

Mr. Patrick McNamara (alternate), a member of Grace CRC, Chatham, Ontario, is a sales representative. He is a graduate of Calvin College. He has served as elder, Sunday school teacher, young people's leader, and on the worship committee. He has been a member of the Chatham Christian School Society and served on the school's long-range planning committee.

Lake Superior

Rev. William C. Tuininga (incumbent) is the pastor of Covenant CRC, Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has served as chair of the classical Home Missions committee, a member of the synodical Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada, and as stated clerk of classis.

Alternate position is currently vacant.

Quinte

Rev. Jake Kuipers (incumbent) is pastor of Ebenezer CRC, Trenton, Ontario. He has served on the Home Missions Board, the classical interim committee, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. He has served on the People for Sunday Association and as synodical deputy. He presently serves as a trustee of the Canadian Minister's Pension Fund.

Rev. William T. Koopmans (alternate) is pastor of Cephas CRC, Peterborough, Ontario. He has served on the Reading Services Committee and the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000. He has served as a delegate to synod five times.

b. At-large member

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also chosen directly by synod. This year, Mrs. Sarah Cook completes her second term and is not eligible for reelection. At-large positions exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

The following slate of names for an at-large position is coming to synod for election of a first term:

Canada: Position 1

Ms. Gayle Monsma, a member of The River Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta, is the principal of Covenant Christian School. She has served as an executive for the Christian Educators' Association, as chair of the Christian Principals' Association, and as member of the boards of the Prairie Association of Christian Schools and the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta. Ms. Monsma has served as chair of the ministry priorities committee and the staffing task force at her church. She has also served as vice-chair of Christian Schools Canada, and as chair of the Edmonton and Area Christian School Athletic Association. In addition, she currently serves as an advisory member of the education committee and board at Covenant Christian School, on mediation committees of Prairie Association of Christian Schools, on the ministry leadership team at her church, on the Alberta Learning's Practice Review Panel, and as a member of the Leduc Pottery Guild. Previously, she served as an elder and has served on the leadership team at her church.

Ms. Hilda Roukema, a member of Ancaster Fellowship CRC, is the executive director of the Ontario Christian School Teachers' Association. She has served on the boards of CRC Publications and the Institute for Christian Studies. She currently serves on the boards of Redeemer University College, Salem Christian Mental Health, and Christian Schools Canada. Ms. Roukema has served on various church committees, as a deacon, and as a catechism teacher.

Canada: Position 2 (alternate only)

Mrs. Cindy Bruins, a member of Willoughby CRC in Langley, British Columbia, is an ESL teacher for adult immigrants. She has served on the church worship committee, the vision team, and various church study committees. Mrs. Bruins has served as chair of the local kindergarten advisory committee, as treasurer of the local school board, as a member of the board of the scout troupe, and as a member of the steering committee of Citizens for Public Justice Calgary. She has also served as the classical appointee to the Committee for Contact with the Government and as a participant in the Canadian Ministries Forum. Mrs. Bruins currently serves as an elder.

Mrs. Faye Martin, a member of New Life CRC in Abbotsford, British Columbia, is not only a part-time Abuse Response Coordinator for Classis B.C. South-East and Classis B.C. North-West, but she also serves on the Abuse Response Team for both of these classes. In addition, she is a resource worker for Bethesda Christian Association for People with Disabilities. She has served as an elder and has coordinated a support-recovery ministry in New Life CRC.

5. Women advisers to synod

Synod 2000 adopted the following recommendation regarding women advisers to synod:

That until the review [of the women in office decision] in 2005, synod make provision to have up to seven women from various regions in the CRC serve as advisers to synod.

(*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 699)

Synod 2001 adopted a set of guidelines to regulate this advisory position (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 493).

On the basis of the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001, the Board appointed the following women advisers for Synod 2005:

Ms. Nell DeBoer
Ms. Marlys Popma
Ms. Beth Ripmeester
Ms. Patricia Storteboom

Note: The Board will appoint additional women advisers at its May meeting.

6. Ministry Associate Report

Synod 2004 referred to the BOT an issue brought to the attention of synod by synodical deputies. The issue that the deputies asked synod to clarify was whether the office of ministry associate is appropriate for denominational staff members who function primarily in administrative positions. The BOT appointed a committee to study this matter and the committee's report and reasoning is attached as background (Appendix A) to this report to Synod 2005.

On the basis of that report, the Board of Trustees is recommending the following:

- a. That synod declare that the office of ministry associate is not an appropriate office for national and international agency staff persons appointed to administrative duties.

Ground: The office is established to enhance the ministry of the local church and not intended for denominational positions with national and international responsibilities.

- b. That synod permit agency personnel who might legitimately be called upon to exhort in CRC churches to seek a denominational license to exhort through the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (see Church Order Article 22 and its Supplement). All requests for licensure will need to be justified and supported by recommendations from the executive director of an agency, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Ground: This exception addresses the major concern raised by one of the mission agencies and permits a mission employee to lead worship in CRC congregations when asked to do so.

- c. That synod instruct the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee to develop guidelines for granting licensure to agency persons who request the privilege of exhorting even though their primary responsibilities are other than serving in a congregational setting.

7. Adoption of change in Church Order Articles

The following changes to the Church Order were considered to be substantial changes by Synod 2004, and Church Order Article 47 states that "no substantial alterations shall be effected by synod [in the Church Order] unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the

advisability of the proposed changes.” The Church Order Supplement, Article 47 (section c) specifies further that:

- c. If the churches and classes have not had prior opportunity to consider a substantial alteration, it must be submitted to a following synod, which will consider its advisability. The first decision shall be understood as a decision to propose; the action of a following synod shall be understood as a decision to adopt.

(Church Order Supplement, Article 47)

a. Article 7 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 619)

Synod 2004 proposed to Synod 2005 that Church Order Article 7 be altered by deleting the phrase “especially when the need is urgent” from the article. The text for Church Order Article 7 follows:

Article 7

a. Those who have not received the prescribed theological training but who give evidence that they are singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word, may, by way of exception, be admitted to the ministry of the Word.

b. The classis, in the presence of the synodical deputies, shall examine these men concerning the required exceptional gifts. With the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, classis shall proceed as circumstances may warrant and in accordance with synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 7

b. Article 36-a (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 541-42)

Synod 2004 proposed to Synod 2005 that Church Order Article 36-a be altered by the insertion of the word *ordinarily* in its text. The whole article follows, but only the change in section 36-a needs to be adopted by Synod 2005:

Article 36

a. The council, consistory, and diaconate shall *ordinarily* meet at least once a month, at a time and place announced to the congregation. Each body shall select its own president and other officers.

b. The council, at least four times per year, shall exercise mutual censure, which concerns the performance of the official duties of the officebearers.

c. Article 84 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 611)

Synod 2004 proposed to Synod 2005 that Church Order Article 84 be altered by adding the following: “Requests for reinstatement to office on the part of those deposed for acts of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct shall be dealt with according to guidelines adopted by synod.” The whole article follows, but only the line in italics needs to be adopted by Synod 2005:

Article 84

Persons who have been suspended or deposed from office may be reinstated if they give sufficient evidence of repentance and if the church judges that they are able to serve effectively. *Requests for reinstatement to office on the part of those deposed for acts of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct shall be dealt with according to guidelines adopted by synod.*

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 78-84

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 82-84

—Cf. Supplement, Article 84

8. Convening churches of synod

The following churches have been designated as convening churches of synod:

2005 – Palos Heights CRC, Palos Heights, Illinois (synod will be held at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois).

2006 – No church has yet been selected. It is likely that a recommendation or invitation will be included in the BOT's supplementary report.

2007 – No church has yet been selected. It is likely that a recommendation or invitation will be included in the BOT's supplementary report.

9. Judicial Code Committee appointment and nominations

The Judicial Code Committee hears appeals from actions taken by a classis or by an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in such cases where the actions are alleged to violate the Church Order or the agencies' mandates. The committee's nine members include persons with legal and nonlegal expertise and include both clergy and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

The procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Article 30-c of the Church Order Supplement. Normally, an aggrieved party brings written charges against another party, setting forth specific acts of the second party that allegedly were wrongful. The committee conducts a hearing, including witness testimony and a presentation of relevant documents. After deliberation, the Judicial Code Committee announces its recommendation. Where appropriate, the committee brings its recommendations to synod for implementation.

Three members of the committee are completing their first terms and are eligible for reelection to a second term: Mr. Robert Jonker, Mr. Ralph Smeda, and Rev. John Steigenga. We thank them for their faithful service and recognize the contribution they have made to the life of the church during their years on the committee and commend them for reelection.

10. Assistance for smaller churches and matters related thereto

Synod 2003 adopted recommendations that required the Board of Trustees to propose criteria, guidelines, and funding proposals regarding smaller churches whether emerging or organized. This project was not completed in time for consideration by Synod 2004, and the BOT was given an additional year to develop a proposal.

The first part of that assignment addresses the question of how membership in congregations is to be determined and the relationship of membership size to the state of being an organized church. The suggested criteria for the proper application of Church Order Article 38 are found in Appendix B.

The financial part of assisting smaller congregations was developed and considered by the BOT at its February 2005 meeting. The Board decided that the proposal needed further refinement and referred it back to the staff for additional work. It is expected that a recommendation will be advanced to Synod 2005 by way of the supplementary report.

11. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, serves as a denominational directory and as a resource for statistical information. In addition to information about classes, congregations, ministers, and agencies, it contains a historical sketch of the life of the church during the previous year and provides obituary information about pastors who died during that year.

Each year, the *Yearbook* is published with greater facility than the year before because of technological refinements. The October deadline for *Yearbook* information allows us to publish in January rather than later in the year as was previously the custom. The book reflects, therefore, denominational and local-church information up to approximately August 31 of the calendar year preceding publication.

The statistics printed beneath the congregational information in the 2005 *Yearbook* in each instance show the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation. By instruction of synod, the following membership totals are listed in the Classical Information: number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and total number of members. In addition, the Classical Information includes the total number of inactive members, the total number of members leaving for other CRCs, and the total number of members received from other CRCs through evangelism and from other denominations.

The Directory of Churches and Ministries in the *Yearbook* includes organized churches, emerging churches, newly planted churches (not yet having statistics), and other ministries, for a total of 1021 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was at the 86 percent level this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 886 ministries.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was printed, incorporating the changes adopted and ratified by Synod 2004. These booklets are updated by the general secretary and reprinted annually, when necessary, and a copy is sent to each church.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the general secretary. As in previous years, some decisions needed to be made about which material properly belonged in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seemed more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether the material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church*

During the past year, the Board of Trustees has again sent to all CRC councils updated materials for the *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church: Your Church in Action*. Several councils ordered new notebooks

because the old ones had been lost or misplaced. This binder should be kept available in every council room.

The *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church* contains the following sections:

- 1) Ministry Shares and Offerings—This section contains financial data and a description of the programs carried on by all CRC boards and agencies as well as by accredited outside agencies. It gives assistance for scheduling special offerings and suggests announcements to be made prior to receiving such offerings.
- 2) Denominational Insights—After a brief statement on the nature of the church and on some of the principles of Reformed church government, this section provides information about the nature of our assemblies, the function of major assemblies, the agenda for synod, and the denominational program structure.
- 3) Congregational Helps—This section contains helps that are available for councils and congregations; suggested rules of procedure and model agendas for council, consistory, and deacons meetings; suggestions for congregational committees; helpful information on the use of members' gifts; and other useful information.
- 4) Ministers' Compensation Survey—By mandate of synod, a survey of ministers' compensation has been prepared each year for use by our pastors and by finance committees of the church councils. The 2004 survey will be presented to Synod 2005 and later mailed to the churches for inclusion in the Handbook. It is intended to be a helpful guide in the setting of salaries and other position-related reimbursements. Because the survey is also used by our pension committees, Synod 1988 passed the following recommendation:

That synod remind the churches that Synod 1982 adopted a recommendation to "require that all ministers complete the salary questionnaire annually to enable the pension committees to accurately calculate the average cash salary as a base for computing ministers' pensions."

(Acts of Synod 1982, p. 51; Acts of Synod 1988, p. 574)

- 5) Doctrinal and Ethical Decisions—This section is indispensable for all who wish to know the position of the CRC on various matters of doctrine and ethics. This section has recently been updated and will be sent on request to any church (or individual) who asks. It can also be found on the CRC website at www.crcna.org/whoweare/beliefs/position.asp?whowearemenu. An abbreviated version can be purchased through CRC Publications by calling 1-800-333-8300.
- e. *Index of Synodical Decisions*

The *Index of Synodical Decisions* is a valuable aid for those who need to research the decisions of synodical assemblies. The index was last updated in 2001 and is available in both book format and CD ROM format through CRC Publications (1-800-333-8300). Work has begun on a new edition that will include decisions of Synods 2001 through 2005 to be completed in spring 2006.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual, originally prepared by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, was revised again in 2004 by the general secretary and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the general secretary.

B. *Program and finance matters*

A good deal of the Board of Trustees' (BOT) work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of agency reports and this section of the BOT's report in this agenda. The details about budgets and other financial matters are contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2005 — Financial and Business Supplement* that is given to delegates to synod at the time the supplementary report is distributed. All requests for offerings and ministry-share allocations will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

Regular reports are provided for the BOT at its meetings throughout the year as the Board provides oversight on behalf of synod. The primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries is provided for through the office of the executive director of ministries (EDM). The Ministry Council (MC) is the general and interagency administrative entity that has responsibility for the overall administration of the denomination and the Denominational Ministries Plan, promotes collaboration among the agencies, and recommends to the Board such program matters as require its approval. The membership of MC is composed of senior denominational staff and is chaired by the EDM. In the new structure that takes effect this summer, MC will be chaired by the executive director (ED).

The Board is thankful to report that the cooperation among the agencies and educational institutions is very good. Joint ministry initiatives, frequent interagency consultations, and the use of shared resources are common. The Board encourages the consolidation of support functions that are common to several or all of the denominational agencies. Particular areas of expertise of one agency are made available to other agencies so that ministry effectiveness and resource efficiencies can be maximized. The result of these efforts has been gratifying. The BOT is committed to continuing the trend of reducing duplication of skills and efforts while maintaining, as much as possible, the specialties in ministry that pertain to specific ministry organizations.

The agencies, with some participation of the educational institutions, have been very active in developing and adapting the use of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology in administering the various ministries of the denomination. Since 1997, all of the agencies and educational institutions have been functioning within the parameters of a Denominational Ministries Plan. The current version of the plan sets out shared values and ministry priorities. A limitation of the present situation is that while the ministry plan is an appropriate blueprint for guiding denominational ministries, actual implementation is made difficult due to fact that each agency and educational institution functions with a significant measure of independence. In too many instances, the ministries plan functions as an add-on to synodically approved mandates of many years standing rather than as the central thrust of an agency's efforts. The Balanced Scorecard methodology is intended to overcome that limitation

as the agencies together adjust to the stated priorities for the whole of the denomination's efforts. An abbreviated description of the scorecard methodology can be found in Appendix C.

In the process of working through a scorecard for denominational ministries, it became apparent that a revised vision and mission statement would be desirable. The BOT recommends that the following new vision statement be approved.

The Vision:

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

The BOT also adopted the following new mission statement for the agencies and educational institutions of the CRC:

The Mission of the Ministries of the CRC:

The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church support and unite the efforts of CRC congregations and assemblies to achieve this vision.

The program and financial matters that were processed by the Board are presented to synod as information. Any matters that require action by synod are clearly identified within the body of this report.

1. Canadian Ministries

The face of ministry in Canada continues to change significantly as the forces of social and political realities continue to unfold at a rapid pace. The issue of the redefinition of marriage (now approved by the courts and on the agenda of the government for legislative action) and the concern of religious freedom for clergy who officiate at most marriages in Canada continues to be prominent in the news.

Specific denominational ministry activity unique to the CRC in Canada is as follows:

a. Urban Aboriginal Ministries

These ministries take place out of three centers in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton, Alberta. The Edmonton Center experienced a transition in leadership when Mr. Harold Roscher was appointed to be the director after the previous director Mr. John Stellingwerf accepted another position in British Columbia.

In the three centers, there is a concern to present and live out the gospel in word and deed. Not only are circle times significant, so is the pursuit of social justice and community development. Achievement of these goals is due in part to the generous support of the congregations of the CRC, as well as significant contributions from government and other agencies that help sustain and develop these ministry efforts.

b. Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG)

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) continues its work of research, advocacy, and education on significant issues in Canadian public policy from a biblical and confessional perspective. CCG strives to develop constructive interaction with (primarily)

federal policy makers, on a range of issues: Canadian poverty, the definition of marriage, international food security, and a number of related issues. CCG and its staff work in collaboration with CRWRC and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, as well as with ecumenical partners such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches, and Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. In all these activities, CCG seeks to work out part of the CRC mission-to “pursue God’s justice and peace in every area of life” (*Our Mission* – CRC).

c. Service Link

The year 2005 marks the tenth year that ServiceLink-Canada has been in existence and has served the members of the CRC, providing them with opportunities of service through its various ministries. Numerous opportunities for volunteer service are processed, and we thank God for the continued blessings in providing such opportunities for service and for the transformation of many lives.

d. Ecumenical relations

Canadian Ministries also involves ecumenical relations. In Canada, we have built on the efforts of the former Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC). Under its auspices, we joined several ecumenical organizations wherein we continue to play a role today, such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Canadian Council of Churches.

2. Report of BOT-related ministry programs

a. The Office of Abuse Prevention

The Office of Abuse Prevention was established by Synod 1994 and functions within the organizational framework of the Denominational Offices. The fact that this ministry is needed in the church is itself a painful reality. As everyone knows, abusive behavior has been in the news a great deal during the last year. Unfortunately, the trauma in other churches as regularly reported in the media, though different in details, is also too often found within the fellowship of the CRC. Our handling of such cases, despite all of synod’s encouragement and advice, is still very uneven. The fact that each reported instance of abuse is handled by a different church council, and in a different classis, makes consistent and evenhanded ministry to victims and perpetrators difficult. The Abuse Prevention office is focused on the prevention side of this painful issue. Ms. Beth Swagman is the director of this ministry, and her report is contained in Appendix D.

The Board of Trustees is recommending two revisions in the guidelines that govern the process when it is alleged that sexual abuse has been committed by a church leader (Appendix D-1). The Board is also recommending a change that allows for the use of an advocate (Appendix D-2). It is recommended that synod approve the changes as presented.

b. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries is served by Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., who himself is a former chaplain in the U.S. Army. Christian Reformed chaplains serve in many different settings and, for the most part, are employed by nondenominational organizations. The nature of chaplaincy work is challenging as people are encountered at their point of greatest need and vulnerability. It is all the more challenging because the ministry is often in a secular or interfaith setting. Just the same, the Christian Reformed Church's ministry is significantly enhanced by the placement of chaplains in these public institutions. Rev. Keizer's report is contained in Appendix E.

Synod 2004 requested the BOT, in consultation with the Ministers Pension Fund trustees, to determine whether Chaplaincy Ministries must still be considered the "employing agency" for denominational pension funds purposes. The original reason for synod's statement that the Chaplains Committee serve that role was because chaplain's pensions were funded through the budget of the then Chaplains Committee. In 1997, that funding arrangement was changed, and the Chaplains Committee was disbanded when Chaplaincy Ministries was first placed within Pastoral Ministries. With the dissolution of the Chaplains Committee, and in view of the fact that such a designation is no longer needed, the BOT decided, in consultation with the Pension Trustees, that the designation is no longer pertinent or needed. However, because the original decision was made by synod itself, it is appropriate that synod ratify that decision by the BOT.

c. The Office of Disability Concerns

The Office of Disability Concerns was established by Synod 1984. Dr. James Vanderlaan continues to faithfully minister to, and with, persons living with disabilities. His report is contained in Appendix F. During the past year, the Disability Concerns Advisory Council sponsored a consultation to discuss the future and scope of this ministry. A large segment of the population live with various forms of disability and it is appropriate to consider to what extent the denomination can respond to that reality. The question is especially pertinent because Dr. Vanderlaan is nearing retirement in 2006. The BOT decided to defer action on the future scope of this ministry until the new administration is able to make an assessment in the near future.

d. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations and Ministerial Information Services

The ministry of this office is under the direction of Rev. Duane Visser who is assisted by Rev. Norman Thomasma. The addition of Rev. Thomasma to the staff is permitting a more serious address to the ministry of prevention. The efforts of Pastor-Church Relations are more fully described in the report that is contained in Appendix G.

e. The Office of Race Relations

The ministry of Race Relations is gaining new momentum with the appointment of Rev. Esteban Lugo to the position of director in the fall of 2004. Rev. Lugo comes to the position with the life-long experience of

living cross-culturally. The first few months have been spent in assessing the state of the ministry in the CRC, and Rev. Lugo has already made several significant changes in the way Race Relations will be advanced in the CRC. One of those changes relates to the antiracism initiative. For several years, we have depended heavily on the training services offered by Crossroads. Rev. Lugo believes, and the Ministry Council has confirmed, that a reduced Crossroads involvement is more appropriate, with the intent that Crossroads involvement will be terminated in 2006.

The central thrust of Rev. Lugo's emphasis is that biblical reconciliation must be part of the antiracism process. The adjustments in the antiracism initiative are being made even as this report is being written. The full text of Rev. Lugo's report is attached in Appendix H.

f. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Concerns about systemic injustice throughout the world—injustices that are the root cause of immense suffering—continue to be the focus of this ministry. The activities that engage the staff of this office are carried out in cooperation with many congregations throughout the denomination, all of the CRC agencies and educational institutions, as well as a number of partner organizations that share our concern for the poor and disenfranchised. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen directs this effort, and his report is contained in Appendix I.

g. The Office of Ministry Planning

Mr. Michael Bruinooge serves the denomination as the director of ministry planning. The basic document of reference is the Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP) that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod reviewed and endorsed the plan in 2002, and the identity statement that is part of the DMP is available in booklet form as well as posted on the denominational website.

The plan identifies four core values, three strategic values, and four strategic priorities for our denominational ministries. They are:

Core values:

- Scripture as interpreted in the Reformed tradition
- A kingdom perspective
- The church as God's new community
- Christian vocation

Strategic values:

- Collaboration
- Justice
- Stewardship

Strategic priorities:

- Church development
- Leadership development
- Integrated ministry to children and youth
- Outreach and discipling

The Board of Trustees requires the agencies and educational institutions to reflect these values and priorities in their plans and monitors programs and budgets for alignment.

The Board uses the ministries plan to set standards for and promote integration of our denominational ministries. For example, when the Board conducted a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of our denominational ministries in 2002 and 2003, it was reflecting the plan's attention to *stewardship*. In the same vein, the Board appointed a committee to examine what should be our CRC ministry priorities overall. When the Board appointed a task force in 2003 to examine models for regional delivery of services to churches, it was reflecting the priority given in the plan to *helping local congregations to flourish*. In addition, the plan's attention to collaboration has meant that the Board regularly monitors its presence or absence in our ministries. The Board has been pleased with the cooperative spirit shown by our institutions and agencies.

Finally, the Board regards the plan as a dynamic document that must be reviewed regularly to ensure that its strategic priorities and goals reflect changing circumstances and the movement of God's Spirit among us.

h. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

The Christian Reformed Church is continuing its involvement in the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative that is funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to support and strengthen pastors in their ministries. The grant amount is \$1,999,278 over five years, ending on December 31, 2007. The grant is administered out of the Denominational Office and represents a collaborative approach involving Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and the Office of Pastor-Church Relations.

This year again we were very pleased with the interest shown in the SPE program by pastors, congregations, classes, and denominational agencies. At the website cited below, a summary of the program can be found, including contact information, vision, program elements, highlights of 2004, and plans for 2005:

Contact information:

Website: www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence

E-mail: pastoralexcellence@crcna.org

Phone: 877-279-9994 (toll-free)

3. Agency presentations at synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at Synod. The following roster for agency presentations is scheduled for Synod 2005:

- CRC Publications
- Home Missions
- Calvin Theological Seminary

4. Executive search report and nominations

As a consequence of the decision made by Synod 2004, the BOT appointed a search committee to identify candidates for the position of executive director (ED), as well as director of denominational ministries (DDM). The search was completed in time for the February 2005 BOT meeting, and the Board is pleased to present the nomination of the Reverend Dr. Calvin L. Bremer for appointment by synod to the position of ED, and the Reverend Gerard L. Dykstra for ratification by synod to the position of DDM. It is assumed that synod will want to interview Dr. Bremer prior to appointment and such an interview will be scheduled by the officers of synod when synod convenes. It is suggested that the advisory committee interview Rev. Dykstra prior to the vote by synod to ratify Rev. Dykstra's appointment by the BOT. The letter of nominations received by the BOT, as well as the personal statements submitted by the candidates, is attached to this report in Appendices J, J-1, and J-2.

5. Director of Canadian Ministries

Subsequent to the resignation of the Canadian Ministries Director in the fall of 2004, the BOT appointed a position-review committee with the mandate to assess the position and its place in the binational administrative structure. The committee submitted its report to the BOT in February 2005 and recommended some relatively minor adjustments to the position description. A search committee is presently active to select the nominee for consideration by the BOT in the fall of 2005. In order to expedite the filling of this position, and in view of the fact that the rules require that an appointment by the BOT be ratified by synod, the BOT requests "power to act" to ratify the appointment when a suitable candidate has been found.

6. Calvin Theological Seminary

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees submitted a communication to Synod 2004 in which it points out the long-standing denominational value of strong interdependence of seminary and church, and asked synod to "affirm this long-standing denominational value and address the implications of this value for future financial support of the seminary." Synod referred this matter to the BOT for consideration and the Board adopted the following to be communicated to the Ministry Council and the Board's own budget review committee:

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church judges that the actions of Synod 2004 in response to the Alternate Routes to Ministry report as well as to the seminary's communication constitute a strong endorsement of Calvin Theological Seminary as the denomination's seminary and of the long-standing denominational value of strong interdependence of the seminary and the CRC. Among the actions of Synod 2004 that constitute this strong endorsement are:

1. Its rejection of the alternate seminaries proposals,
2. Its adoption of Calvin Seminary's Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC), and
3. Its adoption of a modified Synodical Ministry Candidacy Committee (SMCC) that is very closely aligned with, and dependent

upon, Calvin Theological Seminary for the accomplishment of its mandate.

While an affirmation of the interdependence of Calvin Seminary and the CRC assumes and entails financial commitments and priorities to CTS by the denomination, the exact amount and degree of a financial commitment cannot be further stipulated but must be determined alongside other denominational commitments and priorities.

7. Christian Reformed Home Missions

The BOT wishes to inform synod that it approved an exception to the investment policy to allow Home Missions to amortize its reserve funds over a five-year period rather than the normal three-year cycle the policy requires. This exception is time-limited, and the need for it is occasioned by the liquidation of the JCM (formerly IRM) holdings. The liquidation resulted in an influx of cash too great to be accommodated within the normal policy boundaries.

8. The Ministries Priority Report

Synod 2004 affirmed the BOT decision to:

Adopt as its priority for the next five to ten years the creating and sustaining of healthy local congregations in North America.

Grounds:

1. Many local congregations are struggling to build and maintain strong local ministries within their own ministry communities.
2. The local congregations form the foundation that supports joint denominational ministries. If the health of these local churches is not maintained, the ability to continue joint ministries could be greatly impaired.
3. Strong healthy local congregations are necessary to fulfill the great commission in the present North American context.
4. The future viability of the CRCNA depends on maintaining a collaborative relationship between local congregations and the agencies and institutions of the CRCNA.
5. This priority is strongly consistent with the strategic priorities of the Denominational Ministries Plan.

(BOT Minute 2816)

(*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 49)

The Board has continued its work on the implementation of this priority. A major part of that work was to develop a set of characteristics that would begin to describe what it really is that makes a church “healthy.” In addition, the Board spent time analyzing various recommendations about the implementation of that priority. The Board decided to not establish a denominational Office of Congregational Services at this time. It seemed to the BOT that structural changes ought to follow experience rather than vice versa. Rather, the Board authorized three to five pilot positions for the development of congregational advocates. These advocates will live in a region for the specific purpose and with a focused mandate to assist congregations in developing characteristics that lead to health and vitality in life and ministry.

The Board is also continuing its work on allocating financial resources in support of the priority. As this report goes to print, the Board has not yet adopted specific proposals dealing with the allocation of financial

resources. It is hoped that something further will be clarified before synod convenes in June 2005. If so, a progress report will be included in the supplementary report to Synod 2005.

9. The Centennial of the CRC in Canada

2005 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. The formal recognition of this event will be celebrated July 1-3, 2005, by both the Granum and Nobleford, Alberta, congregations. A cross-country bicycle caravan leaving Abbotsford, British Columbia, at the end of June, and ending in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in early September, will further celebrate God’s faithfulness with worship services in CRC communities all across Canada. It is appropriate that Synod 2005 observe this significant celebration and pause to thank the Lord for the contribution the Canadian congregations of the CRC have come to mean to our denominational life and ministry. It is recommended that synod adopt a resolution to mark the occasion and decide to send that resolution to the Granum and Nobleford congregations as well as to each CRC congregation in Canada. Synod can draft its own resolution or approve the one suggested below.

**A Resolution of Gratitude
Adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church
June 2005**

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in session at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, June 11-18, 2005, hereby expresses its gratitude to God, and extends its most sincere congratulations to the Christian Reformed congregations in Granum and Nobleford, Alberta, on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of their respective ministries.

How far, by God’s grace, we have come! From small beginnings in 1905, the CRC family in Canada now numbers more than two hundred fifty congregations. The infusion of thousands of members into the CRC during the years of immigration has proven to be an enriching and blessed development. The continuing commitment to be one church in two nations has made us more effective in our ministries and has strengthened our witness. We are most grateful for the evidences of God’s favor on the path we have walked together.

The founders of the first Christian Reformed congregations in Canada were people of great faith and astounding perseverance. May their testimony be remembered as evidence of God’s faithfulness and of his mighty acts.

Adopted on June fifteen, in the year of our Lord two thousand and five,

(Name of synod’s president)	(Name of synod’s first clerk)
President of Synod 2005	First Clerk of Synod 2005

10. Financial matters

Most of the financial information is contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2005—Business and Financial Supplement* that will be distributed to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include

financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2006 (July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006), and recommended ministry share amounts for the year 2005. In addition, synod will be asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry-share offerings for the ministries of the denomination, a quarterly offering for CRWRC (in lieu of ministry-share support), and the approval of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the supplementary report.

11. CRC Foundation

The CRC Foundation in the United States, a Michigan 501(C)(3) corporation, continues to provide support for some of the ministries of the denomination and to promote interagency projects and initiatives. In late 2003, the CRC Foundation-Canada was formed but has not yet become active in Canada. Most of the activity of the foundation is for the current year in which funds are received and distributed. The foundation directors also function as the oversight board over denominational investments. These investments are primarily composed of temporary cash reserves and bequests that are waiting to be liquidated. Neither the foundation in Canada nor in the United States has significant long-term assets at this time.

Mr. R. Jack and Mrs. Rosemary De Vos have served the CRC Foundation since its formation in 1992 and will be retiring from active service June 30, 2005. The BOT has authorized the CRC Foundation Trustees to secure the services of a full-time director. It is expected that this process will be initiated soon after the new ED begins his service.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. W. Wayne Leys, chairman of the Board; Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; and Mr. John H. Bolt, director of finance and administrative support services, when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency and institution boards (II, A, 1).

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 4).

D. That synod approve the following recommendations regarding the office of ministry associate (II, A, 6):

1. That synod declare that the office of ministry associate is not an appropriate office for national and international agency staff persons appointed to administrative duties.

Ground: The office is established to enhance the ministry of the local church and not intended for denominational positions with national and international responsibilities.

2. That synod permit agency personnel who might legitimately be called upon to exhort in CRC churches to seek a denominational license to exhort through the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (see Church Order Article 22 and its Supplement). All requests for licensure will need to be justified and supported by recommendations from the executive director of an agency, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Ground: This exception addresses the major concern of the mission agencies and permits a mission employee to lead worship in CRC congregations when asked to do so.

3. That synod instruct the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee to develop guidelines for granting licensure to agency persons requesting the privilege of exhorting even though their primary responsibilities are other than serving in a congregational setting.

E. That synod adopt the change proposed by Synod 2004 in Church Order Article 7 (II, A, 7, a).

F. That synod adopt the change proposed by Synod 2004 in Church Order Article 36-a (II, A, 7, b).

G. That synod adopt the change proposed by Synod 2004 in Church Order Article 84 (II, A, 7, c).

H. That synod reappoint the eligible members of the Judicial Code Committee for a second three-year term (II, A, 9).

I. That synod adopt the proposed guidelines for the organization and de-organization of congregations, the appropriate methodology for counting membership, and the financial support proposal (to be submitted by way of the supplementary report) (II, A, 10).

J. That synod adopt the new vision statement for the CRC (II, B).

K. That synod approve the proposed changes in the process for dealing with alleged abuse by leaders in the church (II, B, 2, a).

L. That synod affirm the decision of the BOT that the designation “employing agency” is no longer needed to deal with the status of CRC chaplains (II, B, 2, b).

M. That synod appoint, subject to a satisfactory synodical interview, the Reverend Calvin L. Bremer for the position of Executive Director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America effective August 1, 2005 (II, B, 4).

N. That synod ratify the appointment of the Reverend Gerard L. Dykstra to the position of Director of Denominational Ministries effective August 1, 2005 (II, B, 4).

O. That synod authorize the BOT to ratify the appointment of a Director of Canadian Ministries when one has been chosen for appointment by the BOT (II, B, 5).

P. That synod adopt a Resolution of Gratitude in recognition of the one-hundredth anniversary of the CRC in Canada (II, B, 9).

Q. That synod encourage churches and classes to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 25 to October 2, 2005, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday on October 2, 2005 (see Appendix H).

R. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (see Appendix K).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
David H. Engelhard, general secretary
Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries

Appendix A

Ministry Associate Task Force Report

I. Background

Synod 2004 asked the Board of Trustees to study the practice of agency employees' requesting ordination as ministry associates for their roles in national and international administrative positions (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 608). The synodical deputies who were asked to approve a position description related to such a request raised the question about the propriety of employees' seeking ordination as a ministry associate for such positions (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 605).

The BOT asked Dr. Peter Borgdorff and Dr. David H. Engelhard to convene a task force to study this matter. The task force that was appointed included Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. David H. Engelhard, Dr. Stanley Mast, Dr. George. Vander Weit, and Rev. Steven Van Zanen. On December 13, 2004, the task force assembled to discuss the issues involved.

Foundational to the discussion is the CRC's understanding of the office of ministry associate, which evolved from the office of evangelist established by Synod 1978. This office has sometimes been referred to as a "lay office" because the persons are ordained as elders of a local congregation and not ordained as ministers of the Word. The role and scope of this office was very narrowly understood (evangelist/ church planter) until the mid-nineties when the Church Order was changed to allow the evangelists to serve on the staff of an organized church providing that an ordained minister of the Word was also serving that same church (Church Order Article 23-c). Synod 2001 broadened the role of this office further and said it was an appropriate office for church educators, youth workers, and others. While Synod 2001 broadened the scope of the office, the office itself is still recognized as a specialized form of the office of elder and is very much bound to a local congregation's ministry. When the specific work to which a ministry associate has been assigned or called is complete, then the person no longer retains the office of ministry associate.

Synod 2003 granted the possibility that a "lay chaplain" may be ordained as a ministry associate when he or she serves as an extension of the pastoral care ministry of a local congregation in the community. This is a very recent development, and there are currently no lay chaplains ordained as ministry associates.

Mindful of these foundational realities, the task force reviewed the type of request that initiated the assignment from Synod 2004. The request for

ordination as a ministry associate came from an employee of Christian Reformed World Missions who serves in the administrative position of program director for Africa and Europe. His request provided the following specifics:

As I considered my work with Christian Reformed World Missions, I concluded the following:

1. I am doing the work of a ministry associate. As CRWM Program Director of Africa and Europe, I plan, supervise and support the work of evangelism, church planting and education in a number of countries. Ordination as a ministry associate would structure this work within a recognized church office.
2. My work almost necessitates preaching, on field trips and in North America. This preaching needs church authorization and the accountability that is provided by the office of ministry associate.
3. Ordination as a ministry associate would identify me appropriately to North American churches and to our overseas partners.

The church council of this employee supported his request, and the classis and synodical deputies approved it. As was noted above, however, the synodical deputies were not confident that this was a legitimate application and use of the office of ministry associate. The work being done by the employee is not an extension of the pastoral work of his calling church and it is not limited to the community of the congregation or classis. The position of program director does not require ordination as a minister of the Word or as a ministry associate although the position has been held by those who are ordained.

The director of World Missions is supportive of having his program directors ordained as ministry associates (or ministers of the Word) because they are frequently asked to preach for mission emphasis Sundays and other such occasions. Rather than sending unordained and unlicensed staff to exhort in congregations, the director of World Missions believes it is better to have them properly credentialed. The task force applauds the sensitivity of the director and it, too, believes that promoting an unlicensed or unordained exhorter to the churches is inappropriate. However, the task force does not believe that altering the nature of the ministry associate office for such positions is warranted.

The task force was reminded of the recent establishment of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which has been given the authority to grant licensure to exhort to those who are preparing for ordained ministry. As a task force, we believe that it would be better to grant an exception and permit certain mission agency employees to apply for license to exhort rather than to alter the church's understanding of and use of the office of ministry associate. Not every mission agency employee would need this privilege, but we believe it should be granted only to those whom an executive director and a board of director can with justification recommend to the SMCC.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod declare that the office of ministry associate is not an appropriate office for national and international agency staff persons appointed to administrative duties.

Ground: The office is established to enhance the ministry of the local church and not intended for denominational positions with national and international responsibilities.

B. That synod permit agency personnel who might legitimately be called upon to exhort in CRC churches to seek a denominational license to exhort through the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (see Church Order Article 22 and its Supplement). All requests for licensure will need to be justified and supported by recommendations from the executive director of an agency, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Ground: This exception addresses the major concern of the mission agencies and permits a mission employee to lead worship in CRC congregations when asked to do so.

C. That synod instruct the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee to develop guidelines for granting licensure to agency persons requesting the privilege of exhorting even though their primary responsibilities are other than serving in a congregational setting.

Appendix B

Clarification of Membership Issues and the Organized Status of Congregations

I. Background

At the February 2003 meeting, the BOT referred to the office of the general secretary three issues that were raised in a communication from the Ministers' Pension Trustees. The minute of that meeting reads as follows:

A motion carries that three remaining recommendations in the October 22 letter of the Pension Trustees be referred to the office of the general secretary in consultation with the director of finance and administration for formulation of responses to be submitted to the BOT at its May meeting. The issues to be addressed are:

- a. That requirements for CRC membership be clarified and that denominational administrators request submission of accurate membership information, or, at the very least, to reject such information that seems false or incomplete.
- b. That clear standards for granting or withdrawing organized status to a congregation be made known and that denominational administrators be authorized to review the actions of classes in this regard.
- c. That a process to monitor the recently created "inactive confessing member" class be reviewed and if it is found that such processes do not exist, that the BOT mandate their creation.

In addition to the above assignment, Synod 2003 instructed the Board of Trustees in the following way:

1. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to propose to Synod 2004 criteria for the organization, de-organization, and appropriateness for subsidy of emerging and existing congregations. Specifically, such criteria will help classes and synodical deputies to determine whether, by such standards, a ministry ought to receive financial assistance or retain its status as an organized congregation. Included in establishing such criteria is a mandate to review the widely divergent practices of how membership is counted.

2. That synod instruct the board of Trustees
 - a. To propose to Synod 2004 a list of ministries throughout the denomination that are located in high-need and /or in urban areas that reflect the CRC's commitment to minister among the poor and disenfranchised in our society. Specifically, such ministries shall qualify for special assistance that will sustain and enhance the gospel witness and reflect God's care for the poor, as well as reflect the CRC's commitment to learn together how to minister in urban and other ministries in high-need settings.
 - b. To review and revise such a list annually.
3. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to propose to Synod 2004 a funding stream to support the ministries of smaller or needy congregations that do not qualify for assistance now available through Home Missions.

Grounds for recommendations 1-3:

- a. The historic commitment of the CRC to retain, at all costs, the life and ministry of practically all congregations must be reexamined.
- b. Many congregations presently lack long-term viability and have fallen below the margin of sustainability.
- c. There are those ministries that reflect the presence of God in high-need areas where most CRC congregations cannot effectively minister. Such ministries deserve a broader base of support that can be generated locally.
- d. Special provisions must be made for the financial support of qualifying ministries in the light of the denominational priorities.

(Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 641-42)

At its October 2003 meeting, the BOT adopted a recommendation that addressed the issue of accurate numbers re "inactive members" (see BOT 2763). This report addresses some of the other issues referred to above.

II. Criteria for granting and withdrawing organized status to a congregation

Specific criteria for granting *organized* status to a congregation (Church Order Article 38-b) have never been adopted by synod, but informal criteria have been in place for decades. Home Missions was the overseer of this process for several decades, but for the past fifteen years has withdrawn more and more from this process. Classes are required to approve "organization," and often do so without application of even the informal criteria.

The Home Missions manual related to New Church Development lists the following criteria:

C. Criteria for Organization

An emerging congregation, when it meets the following criteria, is encouraged to petition its classis for permission to organize:

1. Age and size: The congregation ordinarily is 2 or 3 years old and has 75 or more contributing members (approximately 30 member families).

Notes:

- a. It may be desirable for some congregations, in the light of cultural or other local considerations, to organize at an earlier or later point in their development.
 - b. For emerging congregations receiving CRHM funding, a petition from fewer than 50 professing members requires the CRHM endorsement via the HMRD or IMD.
2. Congregational leadership: The congregation includes a sufficient number of members who meet the Biblical requirements for church office and are committed to use their personal and spiritual gifts in providing leadership and support to the congregations and its ministry.

3. Financial stewardship: The congregation exercises financial stewardship for the continuing development and effectiveness of its ministry and, prior to organization, provides the classis with financial information which reflects its capacity and commitment toward financial self-support, including personnel expenses and denominational ministry shares.
4. Continuing ministry: The community in which the congregation is located offers the potential for continuing ministry, and the congregation gives evidence of its continuing commitment to fulfill the great commission with the resources and opportunities God gives.

Emerging and organized churches have different responsibilities with respect to ministry shares. Emerging churches are not expected or required to pay ministry shares, but organized churches are. Theoretically, there is an incentive to remain “emerging” rather than becoming organized. In the past, there was an advantage to becoming organized because the expected payment for the Ministers’ Pension Fund (MPF) was usually much less for a small organized congregation than it was for a small emerging congregation. The regulations adopted by Synod 2003 re the Ministers’ Pension Fund removed this incentive for organizing because all congregations will be required to pay at least a minimum amount per year to MPF (for 2005 it is US\$5,288 and Can\$6,764).

In partial fulfillment of the assignment given by Synod 2003, the following recommendations are proposed by the Board of Trustees:

1. That synod adopt the following criteria, that these criteria be used by classes when they grant organized status to a congregation (Church Order Article 38-b), and that they become Church Order Supplement, Article 38-b:
 - a. (Ordinarily) the congregation shall have been in existence at least three years.
 - b. (Ordinarily) the congregation shall have seventy-five or more active confessing members.
 - c. The congregation shall include a sufficient number of members who meet the biblical requirements for church office and are committed to use their personal and spiritual gifts in providing leadership and support to the congregation and its ministry.
 - d. The congregation exercises financial stewardship for the continuing development and effectiveness of its ministry and, prior to organization, provides the classis with financial information that reflects its capacity and commitment toward financial self-support, including personnel expenses and classical and denominational ministry shares.
 - e. The community in which the congregation is located offers the potential for continuing ministry, and the congregation gives evidence of its continuing commitment to fulfill the great commission with the resources and opportunities God gives.

Grounds:

- 1) Synod 2003 requested such criteria.
- 2) Such criteria will insure that similar decisions regarding organization will be made by all classes.

Note: If the criteria identified above were to be used today, there are currently 62 organized congregations who would not meet the size criteria of “seventy-five or more active confessing members.” They may well meet some of the other criteria, but that data is more difficult to obtain.

2. That synod adopt the following criteria as sufficient indicators that a classis should begin discussing with a congregation the appropriateness of its continuing organized status, and also make this part of Church Order Supplement, Article 38-b:

If for a two-year period a church diminishes to fewer than forty-five active confessing members or shows that it lacks a sufficient number of members who can provide leadership or it can no longer meet its financial obligations or there is no prospect of continued growth, then a classis should consider that these are sufficient indicators for it to begin discussing with such a congregation whether it is still appropriate for it to retain organized status.

III. Membership count

A. Introduction

The mandate to the BOT from Synod 2003 requires that “the widely divergent practices of how membership is counted” be reviewed. Not only may there be divergent practices in counting members, there are also widely divergent practices in reporting members. For years we have heard that churches receiving grants tend to report a larger set of numbers to the granting agency than they do to the Yearbook. They know that ministry shares are figured on the latter numbers.

Theoretically the membership count within the CRC should be very easy to determine. The CRC recognizes two membership categories: baptized members and confessing members. A church need only add up the number in each category and report it to the *Yearbook* and to the classis of which it is a part. The baptized member category has been less problematic to the churches than the confessing member category.

Over the years, synod has recognized that not all churches are able to pay their ministry share amount on each member. The so-called small church category gave a certain reprieve in ministry share expectations to churches smaller than 192 confessing members. This means of assisting smaller churches should not drastically affect the way members are counted, and yet even the smaller churches find it tempting not to record all their members.

One factor affecting membership count is the church council’s knowledge of which members are actually supporting the church financially. There is a temptation to delete certain members from the count when it is known that they are not paying their fair share. These are not members who *cannot* pay but who *do not* pay. Nonetheless, the council does not want to be responsible for ministry shares for such people and thus drops them from the membership count. Denominationally no one really knows how many members are in this category.

Another factor affecting membership count is the category of confessing members who *cannot* rightly be expected to give financially to the church, at least not very much. In this category are college students, single parents, fixed-income elderly, unemployed and underemployed, and so forth. Even though synod has put in place a procedure by which churches can obtain relief

through their classis for such circumstances (*Acts of Synod 1986*, p 709, and *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 567), the temptation (and an easier route) is to obtain relief by not identifying these members in the first place. Therefore, many members in the so-called hardship categories are not reported.

The most recent factor affecting membership count is the category of “inactive baptized member” and “inactive confessing member.” Even though the definition for this inactive category is clearly stated, many churches are not following the definition but instead are lumping many of the members who *cannot* pay and who *do not* pay into this category. The definition for *inactive* is as follows:

The term *inactive* refers to those baptized or confessing members who are declared by the consistory to have a relationship to the congregation which has ceased for one year or who for one year have not made faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the Lord’s Supper, unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., military service, residence in a nursing home, missionary service, students away at school) that make such faithful use impossible.

There are no hard data about how many in the inactive category are appropriately there and how many should really be reported differently. When one is dependent on a thousand different reporting sources, it seems fair to assume that many different factors and presuppositions are influencing the count.

B. Monitoring the membership numbers

1. Confessing members unable to contribute

Recognizing that many, if not all, congregations have some members who are unable to contribute significantly to the ministry expenses of the church, synod put in place a monitoring system almost twenty years ago. In 1986, synod said that any congregation seeking relief from ministry-share payments must seek and receive the approval of its classis (*Acts of Synod 1986*, p. 709). After classis gives its approval, the director of finance and administration is to be informed. This procedure is by no means perfect, but it does retain some accountability closer to home than the denominational office can provide.

2. Inactive confessing members

- a. Currently there is no system in place to monitor the reporting and the veracity of the reporting of inactive confessing members. The Board of Trustees has asked the general secretary to send a letter yearly to those churches who report a higher than average (in 2004 it was about 11 percent) number of inactive members. A system of monitoring and reporting by a classis may provide greater accuracy in this system. For that reason the Board of Trustees makes the following recommendation:

That synod declare that with respect to the count of inactive confessing members that only those numbers will be so recorded in the Yearbook that have been presented to and approved by a church’s classis at its fall meeting. The stated clerk of each classis shall communicate the approved numbers for each congregation to the executive director of the CRC by November 1 of each year. It is understood that these approved numbers are deemed accurate for the purposes of the Ministers’ Pension Fund, classical ministry shares, and denominational ministry shares.

- b. Inasmuch as the category inactive is an anomaly with respect to church membership, and in essence the categorization inactive is the first step (or a preliminary step) of church discipline, it seems appropriate that synod would instruct its churches that no confessing member may be categorized as inactive for more than a set period of time. Given the definition of inactive, by the time a member is categorized as inactive, he or she has not had a relationship with the church for a full year and has not made faithful use of the means of grace during that time. Every year a person is designated as inactive it means one more year in which he or she has neglected the means of grace. Active discipline should begin in such instances and the member be designated differently.

Recommendation: The Board of Trustees recommends that synod instruct the churches that no confessing member may be designated as inactive for more than two consecutive years.

Ground: Inactive is both a temporary and a predisciplinary category and ought not to be used as a long-term designation for members.

C. *Means of releasing members from the church*

1. Introduction

Currently the Christian Reformed Church has four means for releasing members from the membership of the church: (1) Transferring a person's membership on request to another CRC or a church in ecclesiastical fellowship; (2) sending a statement of membership at a person's request to another Christian church not in ecclesiastical fellowship; (3) lapsing members who have not been active in the church for at least two years and have not requested release from membership; (4) excommunication. The first two means of release are benign and imply no negative connotations. The last two means of release are disciplinary in nature although the causes in each case may vary widely.

2. Interface of inactive and lapsing

For purposes of this report, we focus on the interrelationship of the relatively new category of inactive members and on the process of lapsing persons from membership. The definition of an inactive member and the reasons permitted for lapsing a member are very similar and include (1) nonattendance at worship in the congregation and (2) nonsupport of the church's ministries financially. Such neglect of one's baptism and profession of faith elicit disciplinary responses from the church. The designation inactive with respect to a person's membership is the first step toward full disciplinary action or toward lapsing that membership. The category inactive is appropriate after a member has neglected his or her membership for one year, and lapsing is permissible after a member has neglected his or her membership for two years. In terms of church record keeping, however, the inactive person is still a member whereas the lapsed person is no longer counted as a member.

3. Rules for lapsing

Synod 1976 adopted the policy regulating lapsing of members who no longer attend or support the church but still live in the same town or region

of the congregation (see Church Order Supplement, Article 67). Three conditions regulate the application of this process:

- a. [Member] claims to still be committed to the Christian faith.
- b. [Member] claims to be worshipping elsewhere.
- c. The consistory is not aware of any public sin requiring discipline.

Getting reliable information with respect to these conditions is becoming more and more difficult for our elders to obtain. Often the person neglecting his or her membership wants to remain anonymous, and, increasingly, such persons do not have any family or friends in the church who can assist the elders in locating the member. Rather than act hastily and contrary to these conditions, many consistories do nothing and retain such members indefinitely. Many members who could be lapsed are now recorded as inactive.

The regulations regarding lapsing need to be revised so that a church council is able to remove from its records both those who by their request or by their actions make very clear that they do not want to retain membership in that church. Those who walk away and neglect the means of grace are de facto resigning from the church, and the council needs the freedom to acquiesce with such members' implicit resignation from the church. Furthermore, while the elders ought not neglect their role of pursuing the lost and confused, they also should not be required to engage in extensive sleuthing in order to confirm what is obvious to all, namely the neglecting member does not want to be part of the church. Therefore, the BOT recommends the following to synod:

That synod declare:

- a. That the membership of any person whom the consistory has declared to be inactive for two consecutive years may be lapsed. During the second inactive year, the elders should contact the member no fewer than two times, and if the response is continued neglect of the means of grace, the person's membership may be lapsed.
- b. That after two consecutive years in the inactive category, a member must either be lapsed or be recorded as being under discipline.

Appendix C

The Denominational Ministries Plan Scorecard

What we are calling the "Denominational Ministries Plan Scorecard" (DMPS), is an administrative tool for getting consistent and effective follow-through on the ministry plans of our CRC agencies. It has been endorsed by the Board of Trustees and is being implemented beginning in 2005.

Since 1992, this tool has proven its value in many organizational contexts: business, government, and nonprofit. The Scorecard process will monitor goals in relation to four "perspectives" of organizational life:

1. Community – the congregations and others with whom the ministries of the CRCNA have relationships;
2. Processes – key activities done internally to support ministries;

3. Learning and growth – activities to strengthen and support staff and volunteers;
4. Resources – financial and other support necessary for ministry.

Ten to fifteen objectives are being identified that flow from the priorities of the Denominational Ministries Plan and are consistent with the missions of our agencies. These objectives will apply to all ministries of the CRCNA with the exception of Calvin College. One of the appeals of the DMPS is that it will allow us to better integrate the ministries of our agencies, Calvin Theological Seminary included. It will help us to act less like independent entities and more like the collaborators we wish to be.

Progress toward the objectives of the DMPS will be tracked on a single sheet of paper—the Scorecard—and monitored constantly. The DMPS is an “iterative” process; that is, one which encourages frequent self-assessment and then allows adjustments on the basis of the assessment.

The DMPS uses priorities and objectives set by boards and executive staff, but then encourages—in fact, expects—departments and the individuals within them to set their own objectives in a way that is linked to those guiding the whole.

The DMPS becomes the focal point for every meeting and assignment. As one learns to use it, its goals become better defined and expectations more clearly understood. There is less need for meetings to ensure collaboration because everyone’s performance is accountable to the same shared standards.

Why do we need the DMPS? As a whole, we have effective ministries, but we are facing an increasingly uncertain ministry environment. Over time, we have gotten better at coordinating our denominational ministries, but there’s more to be done. Our planning and reporting processes differ from agency to agency. We speak different “languages,” and have struggled to integrate our plans. We can do better. The DMPS is a tool to demonstrate better accountability to our churches and better performance of our ministries.

Some frequently asked questions regarding the DMPS include:

1. How will the DMPS relate to classes and congregations?

The DMPS is a tool for the ministry agencies of the CRC, not for classes and congregations. However, we hope it will result in ministries that are ever more helpful resources for building and sustaining healthy classes and congregations.

2. What is the relationship of the DMPS to current agency plans?

These plans already need to be in harmony with the Denominational Ministries Plan. Those that are consistent with the plan will be maintained and enhanced. The strategic objectives established for CRC ministries will be respectful of agency mandates and plans but also stretch us by helping us to think communally.

3. How long will it take to implement this process?

It will take up to two years to define the broad objectives and measures and then to reflect them throughout our programs and agencies. Thereafter, it is a matter of continually monitoring and adjusting plans.

4. Will this change the way we're organized?

Reorganization is not a goal of the DMPS; better implementation of plans is.

5. Doesn't all this management talk obscure our spiritual mission?

The DMPS process is an effort to make even better use of God's gifts for his purposes. We hope it will allow us to be better stewards of the Lord's resources. By encouraging continuous monitoring of performance and environment, the process will also encourage flexibility and openness to God's leading. Finally, we will always retain the freedom to put aside "the numbers" when more than numbers is at stake.

Appendix D

Abuse Prevention (Ms. Beth A. Swagman, director)

I. Introduction

The mandate for Abuse Prevention is to provide educational resources, develop policies, and conduct training events. These three activities revolve around two core issues: reducing the risk of abuse in the church setting and responding justly when abuse has occurred.

In the congregational setting, church leaders have a moral obligation to reduce the risk of abuse and to respond to a known offender in such a way as to reduce the risk of reoffense taking place in the church.

A risk-reduction strategy does three things. First, it identifies the problem. Second, it includes action steps to prevent the problem, including policies, protocols, resources, and training. Third, it examines attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate the problem or contribute to its existence. Longlasting change occurs when attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs are addressed.

II. Accomplishments

A. The Office of Abuse Prevention encourages each congregation to implement a child safety policy. The CRC was one of the first denominations in North America to establish a baseline child protection policy. Insurance companies have accepted the baseline policy, and it remains a model for other denominations as well. The 2004 Yearbook survey indicates that 317 out of 1022 churches have a child safety policy.

B. The director of Abuse Prevention makes presentations at churches, classes, educational institutions, and other church-sponsored events on a weekly basis from September through May and periodically during the summer. Training addresses abuse dynamics, child safety policies, church leader misconduct, domestic violence, and learning to respond to incidents of abuse.

The Office of Abuse Prevention continues the effort requested by synod, and begun by the Synodical Committee on Abuse, to establish a protocol for responding to allegations of abuse against a church leader. The protocol was approved in 1997 and is known as the advisory panel process. Members of a classical Abuse Response Team administer the process. We know of fourteen panels that have been conducted. This may not represent every panel con-

ducted, however, because the advisory panels are not accountable to the office of Abuse Prevention for their activities.

A breakdown of some panels follows:

- One panel concluded its work without meeting the alleged offender because the evidentiary standard of gravity was not met.
- Another panel concluded its work prematurely because the alleged offender would not meet with the panel upon advice of legal counsel.
- One panel concluded its work prematurely because the confessed offender submitted to discipline.
- At the conclusion of three panels, the council suspended the confessed offender.
- At the conclusion of three other panels, the council retained the confessed offender in his respective office.
- At the conclusion of one panel, the council terminated the employment of the alleged offender.
- At the conclusion of one panel, the council decided to take no further action.
- One panel was preempted when the alleged offender petitioned for another ecclesiastical process.

D. Abuse Awareness was observed in February and ninety-nine churches participated by ordering worship materials. The topic was emotional abuse and the theme was Words: Building Up or Tearing Down. Churches ordered one thousand two hundred small-fee booklets on topics ranging from emotional abuse to parenting a child with a disability to helping a child stay safe on the internet.

III. Challenges

A. The first challenge is developing new protocols and policies to assist church leaders and congregations who face many issues related to misconduct. Here is an example:

When a council and congregation face a disclosure of sexual misconduct by a church leader, should they investigate to see if there were other victims? Should they contact those individuals who may have been victimized by the church leader? Should they inform other congregations of a known offender to prevent him or her from moving around undetected?

Does the council have a moral duty to do these things? Is there an ecclesiastical duty? A legal duty? How should we balance privacy and confidentiality issues on the one hand and protect vulnerable people on the other hand? While the council benefits if decisions for these issues are written out in a safety policy, the policies should not be decided without a frank and open discussion among the leaders and congregation about what should be done.

B. A second challenge is responding to adult victims of church leader misconduct. Victims have few options for seeking restoration and restitution. Presently, victims can approach their church council or the church council of the alleged offenders. For many victims, however, these hurdles are too high to

overcome. For others, the encounter with an untrained council is potentially revictimizing and, indeed, was revictimizing for some. For victims who are not members of the CRC, access is more difficult.

Awareness and education take time, but a trained council has the tools to engage in a ministry of healing, restoration, or forgiveness with either victim or offender. There are many sources for education within the community and denomination. The local classical abuse response teams are an invaluable resource.

C. A third challenge is responding to the rise of reports of sexual misconduct by youth leaders, including paid and volunteer staff. The denomination's ministry to youth is a vital one. The ministry also hinges on the development of interpersonal relationships, which is often the first step in the offender's grooming process. A comprehensive training program for both youth and youth leaders is necessary. Congregations should develop safety policies to protect youth, volunteers, and staff, and they should review existing safety policies for adequate protection of youth, volunteers, and staff.

D. A fourth challenge is responding to the parents whose sons were sexually abused as minors and who struggle with homosexuality as adults. Sexual abuse *always* makes a difference in a child's life. Sexual abuse does not cause homosexuality; it may, however, negatively impact sexual identity issues. When the sexual abuse occurred, the minor was not responsible for the abuse any more than he was responsible for the sexual identity issues. Yet, anecdotally, stories reveal that the parents and sons were blamed and ostracized.

Parents and their sons are overwhelmed by the combined stigma of being a victim and being a homosexual. The congregation that chooses not to respond to one issue very often will not respond to the other issue. Discussions of sexuality offend many people and cause others to look aside. However, if the alternative is silence, we cannot help those who are broken, and we cannot prevent others from suffering the same fate. The crisis of sexual abuse in the denomination is an urgent warning for us to develop models for teaching healthy sexuality and for responding to abuse victims and offenders.

IV. Conclusion

In summary, the answers to these challenges lie not in policies or education alone. The church needs to hold offenders accountable for their misconduct, sometimes years after the offense occurred. The church should engage in learning to restore and reconcile broken people to one another, to the church, and to our Lord.

Appendix D-1 Revised Procedures to the Advisory Panel

I. Background

After several years of study, the procedures of the Advisory Panel Process were approved by Synod 1997. Since their inception, it is estimated that fifteen panels have been held. Each one yielded valuable feedback about the procedures, and two major issues have emerged.

The first issue is how a person with an allegation accesses the Advisory Panel Process. In the present process, that person must contact a member of the executive committee of the church of the accused. The following are the problems that have been identified with accessing the panel process:

- There is difficulty in knowing whom to contact.
- There is extreme difficulty in expressing sexual victimization to a stranger who likely has a relationship with the accused person.
- There is difficulty in getting most consistories and executive committees to believe the victim.
- There is difficulty in getting access to the Abuse Response Team (ART) without the executive committee of the accused's church first deciding to convene it.
- There is difficulty because the church is not well suited to hear matters of sexual victimization. The ART, which was created to assist the church, may be convened only by the executive committee, which is comprised of only two to four individuals who represent the congregation.

The second issue is how the executive committee and consistory handle the Advisory Panel's summary report. The following are the problems that have been identified in regard to the panel's report:

- Most consistories and executive committees have little training to deal with abuse.
- Their inclination is to protect a colleague and to avoid disciplinary action, which seems to be reasonable to them.
- The accused may have a continuing relationship with the executive committee and consistory.
- The person with the allegation is absent when an executive committee and consistory deliberate the contents of the report.
- The advisory panelists have the most experience in these matters, but their reports have not received serious consideration by some consistories.
- The consistory sometimes acts contrarily to the confessions or admissions of the accused as reported by the advisory panel.

II. Proposed actions regarding access to the Advisory Panel

A. If a classis has an Abuse Response Team, then the person with the allegation (or an advocate) should be able to contact either a member of the executive committee (of the accused person's church) or a member of the Abuse Response Team. The contact should include the allegations, in writing, along with a request for an advisory panel.

B. If a classis does not have an Abuse Response Team, then the person with the allegation (or an advocate) should contact a member of the executive committee (of the accused person's church). The contact should include the allegations, in writing, with a request for an advisory panel. Then, the executive committee should contact the nearest classical abuse response team to convene a panel.

In the cases where the ART is contacted directly, the chairperson of the ART (1) notifies the executive committee of the church where the accused person is a member that an advisory panel has been requested and (2) identifies the

accused person and the allegations known at that time. Confidentiality is extremely important.

Grounds:

1. The person with an allegation gains access to the advisory process more quickly and more comfortably.
2. The classical team, which has the experience in abuse dynamics, becomes the access point for the advisory panel process.

III. Proposed actions regarding the Advisory Panel's summary report

The advisory panel process should be revised so that:

A. The executive committee meets with both the chairperson of the panel and the advocate to review the panel's report. When the consistory meets to consider the report, the advocate will be present with the chairperson of the panel.

B. The consistory has twenty-one days from receipt of the report to adjudicate the allegations and decide the next course of action. If a decision is made to take no further action on the report, or if the action taken by the consistory is contrary to the conclusion of the findings of the advisory panel, then the chairperson of the advisory panel, after consultation with the advocate, will submit a copy of the report to the classical interim committee (CIC) with a request for further action.

Grounds:

1. This process assures that the person with the allegation has a voice throughout the adjudication process.
2. This assures that the consistory is accountable to the classis for how it responds to the advisory panel's report. If classis needs to respond to an allegation in the report, then a copy of the report should be given to the classical interim committee.

Note: "Further action" referred to in III, B could include the following:

1. The CIC meets with the executive committee of the council, the chairperson of the panel, and the advocate to review the findings and discuss the possible steps to take with respect to the report
2. The CIC meets with the consistory to review the findings and discuss the possible steps to take with respect to the report
3. The CIC reports on the matter at the next classis meeting.

Appendix D-2

An Advocate Role on the Abuse Response Team

I. Support and advocacy

During the past decade, the role of a *support* person was developed to offer emotional support for both the accuser and the accused (although the same individual does not serve both the accuser and the accused). The support person is important so that neither the accuser nor the accused experience the advisory panel process alone. Because the support person is trained in the

advisory panel process, he or she can assist either the accuser or the accused in understanding the panel process.

In some cases, an *advocate* should be available on behalf of the person who is bringing the allegations. This role is distinguished from that of the *support person* by the way in which advocacy is conducted.

If the person bringing the allegations prefers an advocate, then a support person would not be needed because one aspect of the advocate's role is to offer that support. Because an advocate is not chosen for the accused, the need remains for a support person for the accused. He or she may decline to have a support person present or may bring a support person of his or her own choosing, provided that the support person is not a current or former practicing attorney (cf. II, I).

Note: The advisory panel process ordinarily begins when the person with an allegation, or a representative, contacts the executive committee of the accused person's church. The role of representative was introduced into the panel process when it was initially designed in 1995. It was understood that a person who comes forward with an allegation might have difficulty accessing the executive committee of the accused person's church. For example, how would a person from Fort Collins, Colorado, know who serves on the executive committee of the New Hope Church in Jersey City, New Jersey? A representative was to be an intermediary to gain access to the executive committee. The Office of Abuse Prevention has acted as an intermediary and so have members of a classical Abuse Response Team (ART) and a classical interim committee. The term *representative* was only mentioned in the first step, and the representative was not intended to be more than an intermediary.

The support-person role was born out of the need to ensure that someone would attend the panel sessions with each of the parties involved in the allegation. Thus far, each party has chosen his or her own support person. Therefore, the support-person role is available, but it does not seem necessary to incorporate it into the advisory panel process.

However, many years of experience indicate that there is a need for an advocate as part of this process. An advocate will take the place of the representative. The advocate will also attend the advisory panel session with the person who is making the allegation, as well as the executive committee meeting, the consistory meeting, and the classis meeting. Because this new role gives them a place in these ecclesiastical settings, it is recommended that the advocate role be specifically mentioned in the advisory panel process. It will be more difficult to dismiss the advocate from one of these settings if their presence is approved by a decision of synod.

II. The role of advocacy

The role of the advocate for an accuser within the advisory panel process includes the following:

- A. Assists with contacting the Abuse Response Team in the classis where the accused person has membership to request an advisory panel.
- B. Aids with collecting and organizing all the testimony that supports the allegation, including witnesses who may provide testimony.

- C. Arranges, along with the panel chairperson, transportation, accommodations, and other travel plans as necessary.
- D. Advocates on behalf of the accuser to the panelists if need be.
- E. Advocates in the absence of the accuser at the meeting with the chairperson of the panel and the members of the executive committee.
- F. Encourages the executive committee to pursue whether or not other incidents of misconduct may have occurred.
- G. Advocates in the absence of the accuser during the consistory meeting when the panel chairperson presents the panel's report.
- H. Advocates in the absence of the accuser at the classis meeting when the issues of the allegations are discussed.
- I. Cannot be a present or former practicing attorney.
- J. Cannot substitute the written and verbal testimony of the accuser that is required in the panel process.
- K. Cannot present testimony regarding specific events.
- L. Can *only* identify the specific damage done by the accused's misconduct or other dynamics of abuse as need be.

III. Conclusion

An advocate:

- A. Must be a member of the Christian Reformed Church.
- B. Should be knowledgeable about the advisory panel process.
- C. Agrees to function in the role of an advocate as defined above.

Appendix E

Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., director)

I. Introduction

Chaplaincy Ministries is the office that manages the chaplain's ministry of the denomination. The Christian Reformed Church in North America currently has eighty-four full-time chaplains, eighteen part-time chaplains, and fourteen chaplains in the National Guard and the Reserves. These chaplains serve throughout North America and in overseas assignments. Chaplains serve in such places as the military, hospitals, nursing homes, youth centers, correctional institutions, hospice centers, counseling centers, veterans' medical facilities, and, more recently, in a several workplace settings.

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries works with prospective chaplains to review their training, certification, and application for endorsement. We have ten students who are studying to be chaplains, three in clinical pastoral education, four currently in the seminary interested in becoming institutional chaplains, and three in the military Chaplain Candidate Program. We have a list of sixty-three who have expressed some interest in chaplaincy ministry.

The director offers our chaplains personal and professional support through periodic site visits, e-mail updates, newsletters, regional cluster meetings, and an annual conference. He also works jointly with the calling churches to provide ecclesiastical supervision.

Through the generosity of the churches, the denomination is able to assist prospective chaplains with training stipends. The denomination has in place a process that encourages and sends forth high-quality, professional chaplains.

New chaplains will be needed to replace those who will leave this specialized ministry. There are sixty-two retired chaplains with whom we maintain contact and that number is growing as the current chaplain population ages. We encourage pastors to prayerfully consider this vital and rewarding form of ministry. We also encourage pastors to stress in their congregations the importance of providing a ministry of pastoral care to those who, for various reasons, are unable to be a part of congregational life.

An important role for the office is our participation in governmental and professional organizations. In these organizations, standards for the practice of chaplaincy are discussed. Decisions made by these organizations have an impact on the level of training required for chaplains as well as on the development of chaplaincy programs within institutions. The Christian Reformed Church has a reputation for excellence with these accrediting and certification agencies as well as the institutions in which our chaplains perform ministry, with the result that many of our chaplains have been placed in positions of leadership and responsibility.

We note with gratitude the retirement of the following chaplains: Rev. Ronald Baker, Rev. Stanley Bultman, Rev. Dirk Evans, Rev. John Jansen, and Rev. Harry Kuperus.

The following chaplains were added to the roster during the past year: Rev. Ardean Brock, Rev. Marjorie Kooy, Rev. Kenneth Schepel, and Rev. Siebert Van Houten.

II. Noteworthy events

A. The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education, The National Association of Catholic Chaplains, and the National Association of Jewish Chaplains are working to establish common standards and a code of ethics for chaplains. They have formed the Council on Collaboration to continue to work on systemizing important standards and practices. This development will greatly advance the professional training of chaplains.

B. The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces elected Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., as chair-elect for this current year, and he will assume the role of chair next year.

C. Chaplain Tom Walcott was with the Abe Lincoln Carrier Group that provided assistance to the tsunami victims in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. He was able to contact the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee personnel and work with them as they established their relief efforts in that devastated region.

D. The United States' war with Iraq involved many of the military chaplains—active military, National Guard, and Reserves. Chaplain Eric Verhulst, a lieutenant in the Navy, served in Kuwait and in Afghanistan. Chaplain Timothy Won, a captain in the Army, is on his second tour of duty in Iraq serving with the Tenth Mountain Division. Chaplain Bruce Anderson, a commander in the Navy, is serving with the Marines in Iraq. Chaplain Tyler Wagenmaker, a captain in the Michigan National Guard and the pastor of Beaverdam Christian Reformed Church, is serving in Iraq with a unit from Louisiana. We are thankful to God for these chaplains and for their ministry on behalf of the men and women in the armed services of the United States. We thank the Beaverdam CRC for the sacrifice it is making with the activation of Rev. Wagenmaker for a year and a half.

E. The Christian Reformed Church continues to celebrate the ordination of the first minister assigned as chaplain in the Canadian military. Rev. David Sutherland was ordained on November 23, 2003. Rev. Sutherland, in agreement with the Canadian military, is preparing for his military ministry by serving the Kentville Christian Reformed Church in Nova Scotia for two years. This experience in congregational ministry will prove to be a good foundation on which to build his ministry as a chaplain in the Canadian Forces. He reports to a new posting in Alberta in June.

G. Our chaplains are aging and about forty will retire in the next few years. In order to maintain the commitment to excellence in chaplaincy ministry, a special account called the Chaplain Development Fund was established within the CRC Foundation. This fund will be used for chaplain training, subsidy of salaries, and support for other professional training and development.

H. Chaplain Harold Roscher has been appointed the director of the Edmonton Native Healing Center in Edmonton, Alberta.

I. Many of our chaplains reached milestones in their professional training and were recognized by the professional organization in which they are members. We have several chaplains who are or are becoming Clinical Pastoral Supervisors: Rev. Dean Dyke was certified; Rev. Bob Uken and Pine Rest were reaccredited as a CPE training center; Rev. Corky De Boer was granted associate supervisor status; Rev. Case Vink was recertified as a CPE supervisor; and Rev. Mark Scheffers was certified as an assistant supervisor in CPE. The Association of Professional Chaplains granted Board Certified Chaplain status to Rev. Dirk van der Vorst, Rev. Carol Robinson, Rev. John DeVries (California), Rev. Dennis Kamper, and Rev. Ron De Young. Most of our chaplains continue to study and earn higher levels of professional status as chaplains. We rejoice and thank God for their dedication to excellence in pastoral care.

III. Challenges to the ministry

A. Chaplaincy Ministries seeks to encourage younger persons to enter chaplaincy and requests that synod encourage younger pastors to consider entering such ministry.

B. New chaplains are needed to replace those who will leave this specialized ministry. We have no chaplains in the United States' federal prison system. The synodical Committee to Study Restorative Justice report provides churches and classes with a challenge to ministry within our criminal justice systems to prisoners and their families.

C. We currently have two United States Air Force chaplains. We will lose three chaplains from the Navy before synod next meets.

D. These ministries, in the federal prison system and the military, require that men and women entering these ministries be under age forty. This is a very small pool of ministers in the Christian Reformed Church.

E. The National Guard and Reserves components of our military services offer the possibility for living in two great worlds of ministry—continuing service to a local congregation while also ministering part-time in the armed forces. We encourage pastors to prayerfully consider this vital and rewarding ministry.

F. We encourage pastors to hold before their congregations the importance for the church to provide a ministry of pastoral care, especially to those people who for various reasons are unable to be a part of normal congregational life. As our population ages, pastoral care for the elderly will become a larger part of the church's ministry. Councils should promote and encourage chaplaincy ministry in area senior-citizen homes, in assisted-living facilities, and in long-term care facilities.

G. The office continues to gather information from other denominations on best practices. We will establish and publish clear guidelines for the endorsement of chaplains and for the joint supervision of chaplains. We will work to improve our Chaplaincy Ministries home page.

IV. Conclusion

As the Christian Reformed Church continues to minister in these institutions and moves into the marketplaces of our society, there are many opportunities for the gospel to touch the lives of people who feel hurt, alienated, and, in some cases, abandoned. This population is the one to which chaplains are called and to which they are sent to serve. Our chaplains help people come to grips with the many vexing questions about suffering, death, loss, and quest for meaning in their lives. Our chaplains represent the church in many diverse settings, bringing samples of Christ's love and constant reminders of one's hope in Christ.

Appendix F

Disability Concerns (Dr. James Vanderlaan, director)

I. Introduction

There are two parts to the strategy that Disability Concerns follows in carrying out its synodical mandate. First, we publish the stories of people with disabilities and the help they receive from their churches in our newsletter *Breaking Barriers* (BB) and send it in bulk without charge to all CRC congrega-

tions that agree to distribute it, as well as to many individuals. In this way, we hope to alert congregations to the gifts and needs of people with disabilities.

Second, we develop and maintain a disability network of regional (classical) disability consultants and church contact people to help us provide information and advice to members with disabilities and to their church councils. The following activities fit into this two-part strategy.

II. Activities

Disability Concerns continues to develop the following:

A. Regional disability concerns committees: These committees are constituted primarily of the regional (classical) disability consultants. They give mutual encouragement and advice.

The eastern Canada committee is the oldest and is functioning well. The Chicago committee has been struggling but is renewing itself. The West Michigan committee is the youngest and is planning future activities.

B. Regional cross-disability conferences: We continue to hold the eastern Canada annual conference for the regional church contact people. We have discussed the concept of having other CRC regional cross-disability conferences for Chicago and West Michigan, but we have not yet succeeded with them. Rev. William Van Dyken, Hope Haven chaplain and regional consultant for the three surrounding classes, has been organizing conferences in his area and plans a conference for spring 2005.

C. Regional disability consultants: The regional disability consultants are vital in our effort to assist churches in removing the barriers that keep people with disabilities from using their gifts in the congregation. We meet with all the consultants at an annual disability conference once a year for instruction and inspiration.

The disability consultants are diligent in their work, but they are volunteers, and we regularly need to find successors for them. Of the Canadian classis, two presently need consultants: B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East. In the United States, consultants are needed in: Arizona, Central California, Columbia, Grand Rapids North, Northern Illinois, Northern Michigan, Pacific Hanmi, Pella, Rocky Mountain, Wisconsin, and Yellowstone.

D. Church contact people: At present, 353 churches have church contact people in place, 167 in Canada and 186 in the United States. They see to it that *Breaking Barriers* is distributed in their congregations and that the disability needs are addressed. Of the 1021 total Christian Reformed Churches, 466 receive bulk orders of *BB*—217 in Canada and 249 in the United States. The 113 churches receiving bulk orders that do not have a church contact person ask us to send the order to the pastor, clerk, deaconate, or secretary. We also send one copy to every CRC minister, clerk, and secretary of deacons regardless of whether the church receives a bulk order.

E. *Breaking Barriers*: The circulation of *Breaking Barriers* continues to increase as the following figures show.

Issue	# Ordered
66	56,723
65	55,826
64	52,031
63	50,300
62	48,800
61	47,750

The following is the distribution breakdown for the December 29, 2004, issue # 66 of *Breaking Barriers*:

Distribution	Quantity
Individual U.S.	2,659
Individual Canada	373
Quantities U.S.	23,882
Quantities Canada	25,113
Agency U.S.	1,107
Agency Canada	175
Clerks & Sec. U.S.	1,300
Clerks & Sec. Canada	437
Pastors U.S.	1,304
Pastors Canada	332
Foreign	41
Total	56,723

F. CRC agency contacts: We give class lectures at Calvin Theological Seminary. We also have occasional conversations with agency personnel to enhance awareness of disability issues that may arise in their ministries.

G. Participation in ecumenical and interfaith disability organizations: We participate in the following organizations:

- National Council of Churches of Christ Disability Committee
- Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities
- Pathways to Promise (mental illness and communities of faith)

H. Personal contacts: We steadily communicate by e-mail, letter, phone, and face-to-face meetings with individuals about disability matters. A daily log is kept and, over the course of the year, this becomes an impressive record of ministry contacts and lives touched.

III. Church survey

Synod 1993 adopted the following: “That synod heartily recommend full compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act PL 101-336 and its accompanying regulations in all portions of the CRC located in the U.S. and Canada” (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 539). Disability Concerns is responsible to synod for monitoring denominational developments in achieving this compliance. The *Yearbook* questionnaires, sent annually by the general secretary to all councils, provide the data.

The questionnaire has been slightly altered this year but is essentially unchanged. We have included the primary figures from previous years at the end for comparison. Disability Concerns questionnaire results from *Yearbook 2004* (the database contains 1021 churches) are as follows:

A. Barrier free – 495

1. Worship area – 747
2. Fellowship areas – 703
3. Classrooms – 601
4. Restrooms – 672
5. Pulpit area – 213
6. Main entrance – 681

B. *Signing for the deaf* – 36

1. All services/programs – 5
2. When requested – 56

C. *Aids for hard of hearing and deaf* – 426

1. Special hearing aids – 467
2. Captioned video screening – 50
3. Printed texts of the sermons – 85
4. Other – 67 (they consist of Power Point presentations, overheads, sermon outlines, sound systems and loops, wireless hearing aids, tapes, and video tapes)

D. *Aids for the visually impaired* – 313

1. Large-print bulletins – 237
2. Large-print song books – 386
3. Large-print Bibles – 345
4. Braille when requested – 26

E. *Special programs* – 193

1. Friendship classes – 220
2. Fellowship activities – 132
3. Christian housing assistance – 36
4. Respite care – 35
5. Other – 31 (care to shut-ins, one-on-one for children with mental impairments, special programs as needed, GEMS counseling, attention-deficit education, children's school for autistic and mental impairments, and a support network for special-needs children.)

F. *Transportation* – 269

1. In a lift-equipped church vehicle – 16
2. In an ordinary church-owned vehicle – 96
3. In a privately owned vehicle – 390
4. Weekly – 219
5. When requested – 339

The final question on the questionnaire asks about participation in church activities. The data generated by the answers to this question are not shown in the *Yearbook* but are helpful to Disability Concerns in tracking denominational progress in bringing people with disabilities more fully into church life. The answers this year are as follows:

G. Participation of members with disabilities serving in staff or volunteer positions in the congregation (291 churches responding)

1. Paid staff – 19
2. Officebearer – 52
3. Church-school teacher – 53
4. Usher/greeter – 173
5. Committee member – 141
6. Other – 130 (classroom attendant, friendship staff, choir, sound-booth operator; most did not state what position the person held)

Of the 1021 churches, only 688 churches sent in the 2004 Disability Concerns questionnaire. The answers to the above question for the years 2000-2004 are as follows:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Paid staff	20	13	21	17	19
Officebearer	34	48	61	67	52
Church-school teacher	42	42	49	52	53
Usher/greeter	116	120	155	163	173
Committee member	99	108	128	133	141
Other	70	90	106	137	130

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Barrier-free access	318	383	394	432	495
Signing for deaf	35	44	45	48	36
Providing aids for hearing impaired	437	479	459	426	362
Providing aids for visually impaired	284	444	480	368	313
Providing special programs	225	254	244	209	193
Providing transportation	346	399	334	303	269

Appendix G

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Duane A. Visser, director; Rev. Norman Thomasma, educational specialist)

I. Introduction

The staff of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) is privileged to serve the denomination in a time of challenges for congregations, changing expectations of pastors, growing involvement of specialized ministry staff in congregations, and continued partnerships among church agencies and within congregations.

The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program has provided funds for expanding various PCR programs such as work with mentors, mentees, and regional pastors. Along with these programs, PCR is active in adjusting to the varying demands of pastors, staff, and congregations.

II. Activities

A. A consistent task of PCR is providing consultation and interventions with councils, pastors, and congregations. Leadership in the life of congregations

often requires assistance and support from denominational sources. PCR provides direct intervention and is increasingly aware that these consultations lead to the recognition of a need for further education and training.

B. A gratifying result of the 2003-2004 synodical action expanded the Church Order Article 17 supplement to include advice to classes to encourage pastors and congregations to avail themselves of further assistance after a separation. As a result, more pastors are seeking further counseling and evaluation, and congregations are utilizing interim pastors.

C. There are four specialized interim ministers employed by the denomination:

- Rev. Melle Pool – serving as interim pastor at Bethel CRC in Lacombe, Alberta, and serving as a resource to congregations and pastors in Classes Alberta North and South
- Rev. Larry Slings – First CRC, Allendale, Michigan
- Rev. Leonard Troast – First CRC, Jenison, Michigan
- Rev. Robert Walter – Hope Community CRC, Flagstaff, Arizona

In addition to these specialized interim ministers, there are a number of other pastors who have been trained for this ministry and are serving congregations. They, along with a number of retired pastors, are providing a valuable service to churches that are between pastors.

D. A part of the synodical mandate for PCR is responding to the needs of ministry staff who are not ordained. This work is being done in conjunction with a staff ministry committee. The committee's primary task is to equip and encourage individual staff ministers and to equip and train churches in working with staff ministers and teams. The committee is also working on some matters regarding denominational structure and how that relates to specialized ministry.

In October 2004, the committee sent out a survey to all CRC congregations to determine the number and variety of ministry staff positions in the denomination. The results of these surveys are being studied, and we are discovering a large number of such positions in the churches. In fact, this is the fastest growing area of ministry in the CRC. PCR is thankful to this committee for their work in assisting the denomination in responding to those serving our churches in this capacity.

E. On behalf of the CRC, PCR administers a fund that gives continuing education grants to pastors and ministry staff. A growing number of pastors and staff are making use of these grants.

F. There are sixty-two regional pastors serving fellow pastors in the forty-seven classes of the CRCNA. This year, we will hold our biennial regional pastor's conference at Calvin College. We thank these pastors for their willingness to support colleagues in ministry. Their service as regional pastors is in addition to their work in congregations.

G. The mentoring program, which assigns experienced pastors to work with new pastors for the first five years of their ministry, has received necessary encouragement and assistance through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant. This past year, there was a conference at Calvin College. In 2005, there will be regional meetings throughout the United States and Canada. The

mentoring program becomes a crucial part of the training of pastors, and we are grateful for the work of fellow pastors in providing this support.

H. The Ministerial Information Service maintains over seven hundred pastor profiles and congregational profiles. Through our office and a committee of volunteers, we seek to assist congregations and pastors who are searching for a change. Annually, we send out over two thousand profiles. This is done with the efficient work of Ms. Laura Palsrok, administrative assistant for PCR.

I. In October, PCR cosponsored a conference on retirement planning for pastors. This was well received by those who attended and has become an impetus for developing further opportunities for assisting pastors in this process. PCR has been working with the officers of the board of the U.S. and Canadian pension plans and a group of CRC pastors to meet this goal.

III. Challenges to ministry

A. PCR is seeking to pilot new approaches to assist pastors and congregations in both intervention and education. We are gratified by the responses we receive to our services and seek to meet the challenges for growth among the staff and congregations of the CRCNA.

B. As was mentioned above, the staff ministry committee has completed the first phase of its survey and is studying the results to determine ways that the CRCNA can better utilize, support, and serve those in staff ministries.

C. Our work on retirement planning and our support of pastors and congregations in the transition of retirement is an important opportunity. We are in the process of developing written materials and regional seminars in conjunction with the officers of the board of pension plans.

D. A continuing concern that we are addressing is the need for interim and supply pastors for congregations in transition between pastors. In the next few years, there will be an increase in retirements, and the need for such assistance will be crucial. The challenge for PCR is to assist both pastors and congregations in meeting this need through training and coordination.

Appendix H

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

A new chapter in the ministry of Race Relations for the CRC has begun with the appointment of Rev. Esteban Lugo as the binational denominational director for the Office of Race Relations. Rev. Lugo has relocated to Grand Rapids from Phoenix, Arizona, where he served as senior pastor at Orange-wood CRC. Under his leadership, the office of Race Relations endeavors to carry out the directives given by the BOT to implement synodical decisions regarding “God’s Diverse and Unified Family.” A new mandate was adopted by Synod 2004. It specifies:

CRC Race Relations will initiate and provide effective and collaborative training, programs, and organizing actions in ways that mobilize Christian Reformed agencies and educational institutions, as well as classes and congregations to

recognize, expose, and dismantle racism in all its forms and to experience true biblical racial reconciliation as a diverse and unified family of God.
(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 558)

Rev. Lugo's duties for the near future will include filling in staff positions, serving as adviser to the Ministry Council, and encouraging agencies and educational institutions to participate in advancing the work of antiracism/racial reconciliation within the agency and/or institution.

The Race Relations Advisory Council is expanding and continues to provide encouragement and direction to the work of Race Relations in all its endeavors.

The director of Race Relations and executive director of ministries will be appointing a Race Relations Integrating Team (RRIT) to oversee the expansion of the antiracism/racial reconciliation initiative throughout the United States and Canada. Plans are currently being developed as to what form that expansion will take.

Plans are also underway for a Multiethnic Conference in June 2006. The focus will be on youth. We want to encourage young people to reach out beyond their comfort levels to other people who are not just like them. If racism is going to be dismantled tomorrow, the youth of today need to be active participants.

Activities of the director since his arrival in October 2004 have included: preaching at numerous Grand Rapids area churches; attending and/or speaking at conferences; taking part in antiracism training and meetings; visiting regional sites; and consulting with various people, including ministers and laypeople.

The Office of Race Relations awarded scholarships and grants to twenty-six applicants for a total of \$21,658 for the 2004-2005 academic year. The institutions represented among scholarship recipients were Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Dordt College, Reformed Bible College, Trinity Christian College, and Dominican University.

The ministry of Race Relations requests that synod encourage churches and classes to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 26 through October 2, 2005, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 2.

Grounds:

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism need to be balanced by celebrating and affirming God's gift of unity in diversity through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 2). The congregations that also celebrate World Communion Sunday can find a meaningful Christian Reformed way of doing it by combining both celebrations.
2. The financial support our ministry receives from the All Nations Heritage Sunday celebrations dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award scholarships and grants to promote leadership of people of color in the life of our denomination.

Appendix I

Social Justice and Hunger Action (Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator)

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church has always had a good track record on addressing hunger and poverty but has realized that more needs to be done to address the *root causes* of world hunger. Understanding that hunger is always

part of a complex web of natural disasters, poverty, oppression, structural injustice, and spiritual alienation, the CRC formed the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJHA) to address these root causes.

Today, the OSJHA works to develop a deeper understanding of and response to God's call to let justice flow like a river in our personal and communal lives and in the structures of our societies, especially as it relates to hunger and poverty. The OSJHA works to educate CRC members, to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues, and occasionally to be involved in direct advocacy.

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action acts in three ways: (1) through congregational social justice contacts or groups, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions (see the exciting new work on the Micah Challenge, below), and (3) through ecumenical efforts and partnerships. In short, this office aims to be a catalyst that energizes and organizes our denomination for more appropriate, effective, and efficient action on behalf of and with the poor and the oppressed.

This office recommends strategies and sets priorities based on the needs of existing ministries to the poor and the judgments of the Coordinating Council for Church in Society (CCCiS), a group of representatives from each CRC agency and institution.

II. What is social justice?

When we talk about social justice, we are referring to God's original intention for human society: a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and peace (shalom) reigns. God calls us, the church, to participate in redeeming society so that all—especially the weak and vulnerable—can enjoy God's good gifts. To do this, we identify the root causes of what keeps people poor, hungry, and powerless and then witness and work to remove those barriers.

III. Our work

A. We assist congregations to understand and become active in social justice issues in a variety of ways:

1. With CRWRC, the OSJHA will introduce the global Christian movement, The Micah Challenge, to the CRC. The Micah Challenge, which was endorsed by Synod 2004, challenges Christians to deepen their engagement with the poor and challenges government leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The MDGs are eight measurable, time-bound targets that address poverty and hunger and their root causes. OSJHA and CRWRC are especially excited about using the broad umbrella of the Micah Challenge to engage a new generation of young Christian Reformed people in global justice and poverty issues by providing creative communication techniques, cutting-edge technology, and the tools to build their own grassroots movement. Future plans may include discovery tours and other service-learning opportunities, concerts, and college courses.
2. *The Advocate* is our monthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This increasingly popular newsletter goes in both electronic and paper form to more than one thousand recipients each month and supplies a unique Christian Reformed take on social justice news and events. To subscribe, visit www.crcjustice.org and click on the Advocate Newsletter link.

3. The OSJHA website, www.crcjustice.org serves around one thousand visitors a month. In fall 2004, we relaunched a new and improved website that focuses on practical resources and helpful information geared toward pastors, deacons, social justice committees, students, and every CRC member who wants to live the call to do justice. Highlights include an extensive section on justice and worship; a new section on lifestyle to assist site visitors in making informed, just decisions in their daily lives; and excellent resources such as *Just Basics*, our online student handbook—written by a student for students—on advocacy and action strategies.
 4. *Shalom Seekers: Living the Call to Do Justice* is the OSJHA workshop kit that helps to create or revitalize a social justice committee and to challenge and enrich Bible study or other education groups. Canadian and U.S. versions of the kit are available through Faith Alive Resources (CRC Publications) by calling: 1-800-333-8300 or by visiting: www.faithaliveresources.org.
 5. In Canada, network building includes regular workshops at diaconal conferences, Days of Encouragement, and other venues (i.e., adult Sunday school).
- B. In addition to our core goals of helping congregations and small groups become effective communities of salt and light, we work on education and advocacy regarding selected issues that relate to root causes of poverty and hunger.
1. Peacebuilding has been an expanding effort these past two years. We continue to educate, promote, and advocate for peace and peacebuilding. We are actively engaged in two important CRC actions: Supporting the synodical study committee on war and peace as well as supporting a remarkable Nigerian effort to build lasting peace among Reformed Christians in the Takum region, an area of longstanding CRC mission work. In January 2005, OSJHA cosponsored a CRC Consultation on Peacebuilding in Edmonton, Alberta. Several members of the committee on peace and war were in attendance, as were about twenty-five members and friends of the Christian Reformed Church who encouraged a more pronounced emphasis on peace and peacebuilding in the committee's report.
 2. In Canada, we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives opportunities and advocacy initiatives as well as working with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. This year, we will be especially involved with the KAIROS campaign, Cultivating a Just Peace.
 3. We facilitate advocacy to Washington or Ottawa when appropriate for our areas of focus. This year, such ad hoc advocacy included refugee issues, increasing levels of U.S. assistance to the struggle against HIV-AIDS, increasing U.S. humanitarian aid to Africa, and working to ease the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, looks back with gratitude on a productive year. We look forward to continuing to assist our denomination to become salt and light in the service of God's justice.

Appendix J

Executive Search Committee

January 28, 2005

Board of Trustees
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, SE
Grand Rapids MI 49560

Dear President Leys and Members of the Board of Trustees:

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Executive Search Committee of CRCNA to convey to you the committee's recommendations for persons to serve in the respective positions of Executive Director and Director of Denominational Ministries.

Unanimously and with enthusiasm, the committee recommends that the Board of Trustees forward to Synod 2005:

- a. The nomination of the Reverend Calvin L. Bremer for appointment as Executive Director of Christian Reformed Church in North America; and
- b. For ratification, the board's appointment of your fellow trustee, the Reverend Gerard L. Dykstra, as Director of Denominational Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Description of the Committee and its Work

The committee consists of eight persons. Four members are your fellow trustees: the Reverend Wayne Leys, Mr. Keith Oosthoek, Ms. Gail Jansen, and Ms. Jane Vander Haagen. The other four members are the Reverend Richard E. Williams, the Reverend James Dekker, Mr. William Terpstra, and the undersigned. Dr. Peter Borgdorff and Dr. David Engelhard serve as advisers to the committee.

The Committee first met on July 22, 2004, at the CRC offices in Grand Rapids for the purposes of deciding on committee protocols, a meeting schedule, a method of publicizing the posting of the positions, and establishing a timetable for the intended completion of the committee's work.

The committee announced the availability of the positions utilizing appropriate announcements in *The Banner* and the *Christian Courier*, by direct correspondence to each council in the denomination, and by sending a communication to agency representatives. The responses received by the committee in response to these communications were gratifying both in number and in content.

After the time of gathering responses to the position postings, the committee met for a total of nine days in Chicago: two days each in October, November, and December 2004, and three days in January 2005. In its October 2004 meeting the committee reviewed the application materials that had been received. The November and December 2004 meetings and two of the three January 2005 meetings were used for interviews and an analysis of each interview.

The committee interviewed fourteen of the approximately thirty-three persons who became involved in the process either directly or as recommended by others. The review of the applications and the interviews demonstrated to the committee that the Lord has endowed the Christian Reformed Church with willing, devoted, and gifted servants.

Reasons for the Committee's Recommendations

1. Fitness for Office

The lifestyle and testimony of each nominee disclose that each is a disciple of the Lord Jesus, committed the historic Christian faith, and dedicated to the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ as found in the Christian Reformed Church. Each of them is a trained theologian committed to the Reformed faith. Each possesses the Primary Qualifications, as set forth in the job descriptions, for the respective positions for which he is recommended.

Each nominee has spent a lifetime in the Christian Reformed Church and each is thoroughly familiar with its workings. Each of them has thought long and hard about the denomination's role with respect to individual congregations. Each of them has a realistic view of the denomination's needs in the early twenty-first century. Each of them has articulated a realistic vision for the foreseeable future of the Christian Reformed Church.

2. Leadership Abilities

Calvin L. Bremer: Prior to entering the ministry, Calvin Bremer was engaged in a family business. As a minister, Reverend Bremer has served as a parish pastor for twenty-four (24) years. During those years he has been significantly involved in the ecclesiastical life of the denomination as a delegate to classis, to synod, and as a member of various denominational boards (including the Board of Trustees). In addition, for the past nine (9) years Reverend Bremer has served the Back to God Hour and currently serves as its Executive Director. He has demonstrated management ability in that position including the willingness to make difficult decisions when required. As an agency director he has espoused and worked for the achievement of denominational goals. He cultivates good personal relationships including the ability to listen to and understand others. The Committee is confident that he possesses the required leadership abilities to function as Executive Director of the Christian Reformed Church.

Gerard L. Dykstra: Prior to entering the ministry at age 40, Gerard Dykstra was an owner, president, and general manager of a dairy equipment and construction company. He knows how to manage people. He understands budgets and the budgetary process. He has been a pastor for almost fifteen years. He has a warm and humble, but unmistakably clear, leadership style. He understands denominational issues and desires to conclude his ministerial career by making an important contribution to denominational life. He articulates his willingness to serve the Christian Reformed Church wherever needed and called. He also possesses a keen understanding of the issues that face the Christian Reformed Church. As a pastor he is aware of the importance of healthy local congregations. He described for the committee certain issues and challenges he has encountered in his ministerial experience and how he dealt in a Christ-like and loving manner with them. The committee is confident

that Reverend Dykstra possesses the leadership abilities to coordinate the efforts of denominational agencies with humility and grace and to work toward the collaborative efforts of the agencies.

3. Compatibility

From the outset of the process, the committee has been acutely aware that it was charged with the responsibility of recommending two persons for positions that were closely linked and that, accordingly, each of them had to understand their respective roles, the other's role, and be compatible with the other. The interviews revealed that many of the candidates perceived similar sensitivities.

Toward the end of the interview process, the committee revealed to both Reverend Bremer and Reverend Dykstra the committee's intent to recommend them for the respective positions. The committee arranged meetings between them so that they could become better acquainted and make a decision whether the contemplated arrangement was potentially workable. The results of these meetings were indeed positive.

Each of them has had an individual session with Dr. Kirk Brink, the psychologist consultant used by CRCNA, and they also met together with Dr. Brink. Dr. Brink's conclusion is that together they should make a compatible team.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated, the committee requests that the Board of Trustees accept the committee's recommendations and discharge the committee. I am confident in that I speak for each committee member in thanking you for the opportunity and privilege that you have given to each of us to be of service to the Christian Reformed Church and to our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We remember the important work of the Board of Trustees in our prayers.

In Christ's Name,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William B. Weidenaar".

William B. Weidenaar, Chair
Executive Search Committee

Appendix J-1
Curriculum Vitae

Calvin L. Bremer

Personal Description:

I am a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. I am in relationship with him because of his grace. I enjoy the benefits of that relationship through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. I strive to daily live my life conscious of God’s presence and seeking to do his will.

I am a husband, father, and grandfather. Janelle and I were married in 1968. We were blessed with two children, a son Trent, and daughter Janna. Each of our children married Christians and we now consider Paula and Darren our children as well. We have four grandchildren at the time of this submission. Trent and Paula live in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with their son. Darren and Janna are building a home for themselves and their three boys in Crown Point, Indiana.

I am a churchman and a missionary. I have been privileged to serve the church in a formal way for over thirty-two years. For over twenty-three years I served local congregations, assisting them in discovering and fulfilling their mission. For the last nine years I have had the privilege of serving the Christian Reformed Church in its electronic media ministry, The Back to God Hour.

Educational History:

Calvin College	1969
Calvin Theological Seminary	1972
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	1983

Work History:

March 2001 – present	Executive Director of the Back to God Hour
1996 – March 2001	Director of Ministries at the Back to God Hour
1978 – 1996	Pastor of Worship and Administration – Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Lansing, Illinois
1972 – 1978	Pastor of Arcadia Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan (In 1985, this congregation merged with Plainfield CRC and is now known as Blythfield CRC.)
1966 – 1972	Licensed as heating and air conditioning installer in Michigan – worked part-time through college and seminary

Appendix J-2
Curriculum Vitae

Gerard L. Dykstra

Personal Description:

My life began in a small parsonage located near the shores of Lake Michigan in Holland, Michigan. During my formative years, my father served five churches in various parts of the country, ending in Chino, California. I married Linda during college, and we eventually had four children—three of whom are married; one passed away in 1999. We also have four grandchildren.

After receiving my degree from Calvin College, I joined the California National Guard and after six years was honorably discharged. Then for twelve years, God put me into the business world at a dairy equipment company. After spending twelve years in business, I answered God’s call for ministry, which eventually led to my being graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1990. During seminary, I served alongside the pastor at Ada CRC, Ada, Michigan; after seminary, I served two churches—one in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and one in Walnut Creek, California.

I am committed to the Christian Reformed Church—serving two churches, being on the Board of Trustees, and being trained in Natural Church Development. I find denominational work both stimulating and rewarding. I feel that God is leading me to be a key player in meeting the challenges that have been set before us, and God has given me the unique gifts of the ability to see the big picture and how each of the details ultimately forms the big picture. In short, I believe that God has equipped and called me to use what he has given me to continue the work he has begun.

Educational History:

Calvin College	1972
Westminster Theological Seminary	1987
Calvin Theological Seminary	1990

Work History:

September 1996 – present	Pastor, Faith Christian Fellowship CRC, Walnut Creek, California
September 1990 – August 1996	Pastor, Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
September 1987 – August 1990	Intern, Ada Christian Reformed Church, Ada, Michigan
May 1974 – June 1987	President and General Manager, Brinderson De Laval Sales and Service, Inc., Ontario, California
August 1972 – July 1978	California National Guard, Honorably Discharged, Staff Sergeant

Appendix K

Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Hour/CRC-TV Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,104	-	-	-	1,104
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	2,620	1,942	-	100	4,662
Receivables & Advances	69	-	18	-	87
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	638	-	-	-	638
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,431	1,942	18	100	6,491
Accounts Payable	475	-	-	-	475
Notes/Loans Payable	887	-	-	-	887
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,474	-	-	-	1,474
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,836	-	-	-	2,836
Net Assets	\$ 1,595	1,942	18	100	3,655
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.	Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. The income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Board Restrictions: 1,942,000 Estate				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	In process church programs with Home Missions				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Hour/CRC-TV
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,081	\$	4,209
% of Total Income		42.6%		42.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,063	\$	3,567
Estate Gifts	\$	1,852	\$	831
Total Gift Income		4,915		4,398
% of Total Income		51.3%		44.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	237	\$	321
Miscellaneous	\$	339	\$	908
Total Other Income		576		1,229
% of Total Income		6.0%		12.5%
TOTAL INCOME		9,572		9,836
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	2,702	\$	2,832
FTEs		5		5
International	\$	3,129	\$	3,292
FTEs		12		13
Television	\$	1,891	\$	1,425
FTEs		10		5
Television - Animation	\$	849	\$	200
		-		-
New Language Program Initiatives	\$	-	\$	85
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,571	\$	7,834
Total Program Service FTEs		27		23
% of Total \$		84.2%		81.0%
% of Total FTEs		75.0%		71.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	513	\$	556
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,093	\$	1,287
FTEs		5		5
Total Support Service \$		1,606		1,843
Total Support Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total \$		15.8%		19.0%
% of Total FTEs		25.0%		28.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	10,177	\$	9,677
TOTAL FTEs		36		32
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(605)	\$	159

Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,340	-			1,340
CDs, Time Deposits	100	-	-	-	100
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	21,829	-	1,883	4,316	28,028
Inventory	432	-		-	432
Prepays & Advances	545	-	14		559
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	15,199	-	854	8,932	24,985
Equities	38,127	-	3,806	46,974	88,907
Partnerships	-	-	-	4,456	4,456
Property (non-operating)	71	-	-	241	312
PP & E	123,474	-	-	-	123,474
Other	2,603	-	4,105	4,083	10,791
Total Assets	203,720	-	10,662	69,002	283,384
Accounts Payable	3,755	-	-	-	3,755
Notes/Loans Payable	47,450	-	-	230	47,680
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	6,398	-	-	-	6,398
Deferred Income	866	-	-	-	866
Other	32,102	-	136	8	32,246
Total Liabilities	90,571	-	136	238	90,945
Net Assets	\$ 113,149	-	10,526	68,764	192,439
Footnotes:	<p>Over 500 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources</p> <p>endowed gifts</p>				
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Calvin College
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,798	\$	2,732
% of Total Income		3.2%		2.9%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	2,677	\$	3,428
Estate Gifts	\$	34	\$	10
Total Gift Income		2,711		3,438
% of Total Income		3.1%		3.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	81,432	\$	86,499
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	1,687	\$	1,272
Total Other Income		83,119		87,771
% of Total Income		93.8%		93.4%
TOTAL INCOME		88,628		93,941
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Education	\$	74,555	\$	80,834
FTEs		589		591
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	74,555	\$	80,834
Total Program Service FTEs		589		591
% of Total \$		86.6%		87.1%
% of Total FTEs		82.3%		81.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	4,471	\$	4,650
FTEs		48		52
Plant Operations	\$	4,727	\$	4,941
FTEs		56		58
Fund Raising	\$	2,356	\$	2,417
FTEs		23		22
Total Support Service \$		11,554		12,008
Total Support Service FTEs		127		132
% of Total \$		13.4%		12.9%
% of Total FTEs		17.7%		18.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	86,109	\$	92,842
TOTAL FTEs		716		723
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	2,519	\$	1,099

**Calvin Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,060	-	-	-	1,060
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	1,240	-	-	-	1,240
Receivables & Advances	199	941	2,342	-	3,482
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	23	-	-	23
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,657	-	-	-	10,657
Other	-	1,260	-	-	1,260
Total Assets	13,156	2,224	2,342	-	17,722
Accounts Payable	130	61	-	-	191
Notes/Loans Payable	562	287	-	-	849
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	143	-	-	-	143
Other	820	-	-	-	820
Total Liabilities	1,655	348	-	-	2,003
Net Assets	\$ 11,501	1,876	2,342	-	15,719
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds \$15,301M , Annuity payable \$378M Any balance due to other funds for these assets is included under "other" as unrestricted in Ag. Desig.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Construction liabilities, Student loan receivables and liabilities				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	donor designated, program, scholarship, grants and construction pledges				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Calvin Seminary
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,519	\$	2,695
% of Total Income		47.6%		49.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	873	\$	817
Estate Gifts	\$	91	\$	50
Total Gift Income		964		867
% of Total Income		18.2%		16.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	1,318	\$	1,480
Grants	\$	369	\$	334
Miscellaneous	\$	124	\$	51
Total Other Income		1,811		1,865
% of Total Income		34.2%		34.4%
TOTAL INCOME		5,294		5,427
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,471	\$	2,330
FTEs		27		27
Public Service	\$	66	\$	50
FTEs		-		-
Academic Support	\$	655	\$	723
FTEs		3		3
Student Services	\$	490	\$	483
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	263	\$	234
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,945	\$	3,820
Total Program Service FTEs		35		35
% of Total \$		75.0%		71.3%
% of Total FTEs		77.8%		76.1%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	544	\$	786
FTEs		5		6
Plant Operations	\$	311	\$	361
FTEs		2		1
Fund Raising	\$	460	\$	388
FTEs		3		4
Total Support Service \$		1,315		1,535
Total Support Service FTEs		10		11
% of Total \$		25.0%		28.7%
% of Total FTEs		22.2%		23.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,260	\$	5,355
TOTAL FTEs		45		46
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	34	\$	72

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Canadian Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	583	\$	596
% of Total Income		94.6%		99.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	33	\$	37
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		33		37
% of Total Income		5.4%		6.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	-	\$	(32)
Total Other Income		-		(32)
% of Total Income		0.0%		-5.3%
TOTAL INCOME		616		601
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Govt. Contact/Church in Soc.	\$	45	\$	53
FTEs		1		1
Indian Ministries	\$	359	\$	421
FTEs		3		3
Electronic Media	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Canadian Ministry Forum	\$	2	\$	18
FTEs		-		-
Other	\$	23	\$	32
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	429	\$	524
Total Program Service FTEs		4		4
% of Total \$		91.9%		92.6%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	38	\$	42
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		38		42
Total Support Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		8.1%		7.4%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	467	\$	566
TOTAL FTEs		4		4
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	149	\$	35

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	December 31, 2004				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,611	-	-	-	1,611
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	41	-	-	-	41
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	209	-	-	-	209
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,838	-	-	-	2,838
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,699	-	-	-	4,699
Accounts Payable	53	-	-	-	53
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	665	-	-	-	665
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	718	-	-	-	718
Net Assets	\$ 3,981	-	-	-	3,981
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

		2003 Actual		2004 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Premiums	\$	7,245	\$	7,778
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	100	\$	69
Total Other Income		7,345		7,847
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		7,345		7,847
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Claims Expense	\$	5,828	\$	6,705
FTEs		-		-
Insurance Premiums	\$	353	\$	366
FTEs		-		-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$	529	\$	554
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,710	\$	7,625
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		97.3%		97.6%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	187	\$	184
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		187		184
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total \$		4.3%		4.3%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	6,897	\$	7,809
TOTAL FTEs		3		3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	448	\$	38

**CRC Publications
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 949	500	22	-	1,471
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	634	-	60	-	694
Inventory	1,873	-	-	-	1,873
Prepays & Advances	83	-	-	-	83
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	702	-	-	-	702
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	23	-	-	-	23
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,264	500	82	-	4,846
Accounts Payable	497	-	-	-	497
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	583	-	-	-	583
Other	139	-	-	-	139
Total Liabilities	1,219	-	-	-	1,219
Net Assets	\$ 3,045	500	82	-	3,627
Footnotes:	<p>Funds for new curriculum development cost.</p>				
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

CRC Publications
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	736	\$	862
% of Total Income		12.6%		15.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	65	\$	49
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		65		49
% of Total Income		1.1%		0.9%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,909	\$	4,554
Grants	\$	118	\$	119
Miscellaneous	\$	14	\$	6
Total Other Income		5,041		4,679
% of Total Income		86.3%		83.7%
TOTAL INCOME		5,842		5,590
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	819	\$	757
FTEs		4		4
Education	\$	3,390	\$	3,202
FTEs		20		18
World Literature	\$	493	\$	350
FTEs		3		3
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,702	\$	4,309
Total Program Service FTEs		27		25
% of Total \$		88.6%		86.2%
% of Total FTEs		93.1%		92.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	603	\$	691
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		603		691
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		11.4%		13.8%
% of Total FTEs		6.9%		7.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,305	\$	5,000
TOTAL FTEs		29		27
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	537	\$	590

**Denominational Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2004				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,232	-	1,347	-	2,579
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,860	-	110	-	1,970
Inventory	473	-	-	-	473
Prepays & Advances	35	-	-	-	35
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	9,596	-	-	-	9,596
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,255	-	-	-	5,255
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	18,451	-	1,457	-	19,908
Accounts Payable	1,364	-	-	-	1,364
Notes/Loans Payable	9,536	-	-	-	9,536
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	170	-	-	-	170
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	11,070	-	-	-	11,070
Net Assets	\$ 7,381	-	1,457	-	8,838
Footnotes:	<p>Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program</p> <p>Includes \$1,974,000 of Lilly Foundation grant balance</p>				
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations					
Note 3: List details of restrictions					
Note 4: List details of restrictions					

**Denominational Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,995	\$	2,089
% of Total Income		16.7%		20.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	52	\$	17
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		52		17
% of Total Income		0.4%		0.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,111	\$	4,317
Grants	\$	2,183	\$	423
Miscellaneous	\$	3,596	\$	3,497
Total Other Income		9,890		8,237
% of Total Income		82.9%		79.6%
TOTAL INCOME		11,937		10,343
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	881	\$	937
FTEs		5		5
Soc Just Ed./Communications	\$	531	\$	626
FTEs		3		3
CRCPlan/Lilly Grant	\$	179	\$	712
FTEs		2		2
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$	4,355	\$	4,516
FTEs		30		29
Finance/Payroll/Development	\$	1,527	\$	1,691
FTEs		17		21
Information Services	\$	530	\$	570
FTEs		7		7
Personnel	\$	126	\$	121
FTEs		2		2
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,129	\$	9,173
Total Program Service FTEs		66		69
% of Total \$		85.9%		87.0%
% of Total FTEs		88.0%		89.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	627	\$	610
FTEs		5		4
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	638	\$	693
FTEs		3		3
Fund Raising (Foundation)	\$	71	\$	63
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		1,336		1,366
Total Support Service FTEs		9		8
% of Total \$		14.1%		13.0%
% of Total FTEs		12.0%		10.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,465	\$	10,539
TOTAL FTEs		75		77
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	2,472	\$	(196)

Employees' Retirement Plan - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	50	-	-	-	50
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,219	-	-	-	2,219
Equities	9,347	-	-	-	9,347
GLCs / Stable Asset Fund	5,805	-	-	-	5,805
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	17,421	-	-	-	17,421
Accounts Payable	6	-	-	-	6
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	6	-	-	-	6
Net Assets	\$ 17,415	-	-	-	17,415
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Employees' Retirement Plan - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

		2003 Actual	2004 Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	- \$	-
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Employer Contributions	\$	912 \$	950
Grants	\$	- \$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	2,020 \$	1,239
Total Other Income		2,932	2,189
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		2,932	2,189
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	1,345 \$	835
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Total Program-service \$	\$	1,345 \$	835
Total Program-service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		93.9%	90.1%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	87 \$	92
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Total Support-service \$		87	92
Total Support-service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		6.1%	9.9%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	1,432	\$ 927
TOTAL FTEs		1	1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	1,500	\$ 1,262

Fund for Smaller Churches
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 841	-	-	-	841
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	841	-	-	-	841
Accounts Payable	22	-	-	-	22
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	22	-	-	-	22
Net Assets	\$ 819	-	-	-	819
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Fund for Smaller Churches
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	261	\$	260
% of Total Income		91.3%		91.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1	\$	7
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		1		7
% of Total Income		0.3%		2.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	24	\$	18
Total Other Income		24		18
% of Total Income		8.4%		6.3%
TOTAL INCOME		286		285
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Subsidy Requests	\$	405	\$	422
FTEs		1		1
Auto & Moving Expenses	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Small Church Specialists	\$	58	\$	71
FTEs		-		1
Education	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Small Church Technology Upgrade	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Small Church Program Support	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	463	\$	493
Total Program Service FTEs		1		2
% of Total \$		96.9%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	15	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		15		-
Total Support Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		3.1%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	478	\$	493
TOTAL FTEs		1		2
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(192)	\$	(208)

Home Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2004-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,151	-	-	-	1,151
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities			-		-
Receivables & Advances	1,373	-	-	-	1,373
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	28	-	-	-	28
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	910	339	15	-	1,264
Equities	-	59		527	586
Partnerships		2,982	-	-	2,982
Property (non-operating)	43	-	-	-	43
PP & E	48	-	-	-	48
Other	53	-	-	-	53
Total Assets	3,606	3,380	15	527	7,528
Accounts Payable	246	-	-	-	246
Notes/Loans Payable	131	-	-	-	131
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	435	-	-	-	435
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	812	-	-	-	812
Net Assets	\$ 2,794	3,380	15	527	6,716
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Trng:\$339 Hawaii: \$1282				
	Estates: \$1787				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: \$15				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Short term Loan:\$481 NA Trn:\$31 Trust:\$15				

Home Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,713	\$	4,882
% of Total Income		62.9%		63.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,342	\$	1,460
Estate Gifts	\$	728	\$	375
Total Gift Income		2,070		1,835
% of Total Income		27.6%		23.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	87	\$	78
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	623	\$	916
Total Other Income		710		994
% of Total Income		9.5%		12.9%
TOTAL INCOME		7,493		7,711
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
New-Church Development	\$	4,077	\$	4,112
FTEs		13		13
Established-Church Develop.	\$	1,645	\$	1,408
FTEs		17		17
Campus/schools	\$	922	\$	848
FTEs		2		2
Ministry Teams	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Ministry Development	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,644	\$	6,368
Total Program Service FTEs		32		32
% of Total \$		82.7%		81.2%
% of Total FTEs		78.0%		80.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	725	\$	803
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	665	\$	672
FTEs		6		5
Total Support Service \$		1,390		1,475
Total Support Service FTEs		9		8
% of Total \$		17.3%		18.8%
% of Total FTEs		22.0%		20.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	8,034	\$	7,843
TOTAL FTEs		41		40
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(541)	\$	(132)

**Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 8,302	-	-	-	8,302
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	11,772	-	-	-	11,772
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	20,074	-	-	-	20,074
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	15,846	-	-	-	15,846
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	15,846	-	-	-	15,846
Net Assets	\$ 4,228	-	-	-	4,228
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations					
Note 3: List details of restrictions					
Note 4: List details of restrictions					

Loan Fund
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	965	\$	821
Total Other Income		965		821
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		965		821
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Loan Interest	\$	677	\$	553
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	677	\$	553
Total Program Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		82.5%		76.4%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%		50.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	144	\$	171
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		144		171
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		17.5%		23.6%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%		50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	821	\$	724
TOTAL FTEs		2		2
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	144	\$	97

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Balance Sheet (000s) in Canadian \$

	December 31, 2004			
	Pension	S.A.F		Total
Cash	\$ 1,706	115	-	1,821
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	137	2	-	139
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	9,101	-	-	9,101
Equities	14,192	-	-	14,192
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	25,136	117	-	25,253
Accounts Payable	77	-	-	77
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	77	-	-	77
Net Assets	\$ 25,059	117	-	25,176
Footnotes:				
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.				
Note 2: List details of designations				
Note 3: List details of restrictions				
Note 4: List details of restrictions				

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian \$

		MPF 2003 Actual		MPF 2004 Actual		SAF 2003 Actual		SAF 2004 Actual
ADDITIONS:								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	16
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		84.2%
Other Gift Income:								
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:								
Participant Assessments	\$	1,151	\$	1,644	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	2,716	\$	2,642	\$	3	\$	3
Total Other Income		3,867		4,286		3		3
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		100.0%		15.8%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		3,867		4,286		3		19
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):								
Program Services:								
Distributions	\$	1,743	\$	1,834	\$	25	\$	13
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,743	\$	1,834	\$	25	\$	13
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		87.5%		84.2%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				
Support Services:								
Management & General	\$	248	\$	344	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		248		344		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		12.5%		15.8%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	1,991	\$	2,178	\$	25	\$	13
TOTAL FTEs		1		1		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	1,876	\$	2,108	\$	(22)	\$	6

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----December 31, 2004-----			
	Pension	S.A.F		Total
Cash	\$ 3,597	97	-	3,694
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	436	-	-	436
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	25,708	-	-	25,708
Equities	65,292	-	-	65,292
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	95,033	97	-	95,130
Accounts Payable	155	6	-	161
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	155	6	-	161
Net Assets	\$ 94,878	91	-	94,969
Footnotes:				
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.				
Note 2: List details of designations				
Note 3: List details of restrictions				
Note 4: List details of restrictions				

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	MPF 2003 Actual		MPF 2004 Actual		SAF 2003 Actual		SAF 2004 Actual	
ADDITIONS:								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	66
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		98.5%
Other Gift Income:								
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:								
Participant Assessments	\$	2,889	\$	4,018	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	15,137	\$	8,766	\$	2	\$	1
Total Other Income		18,026		12,784		2		1
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		100.0%		1.5%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		18,026		12,784		2		67
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):								
Program Services:								
Distributions	\$	6,250	\$	6,261	\$	40	\$	80
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,250	\$	6,261	\$	40	\$	80
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		90.4%		89.9%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				
Support Services:								
Management & General	\$	667	\$	703	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		667		703		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		9.6%		10.1%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	6,917	\$	6,964	\$	40	\$	80
TOTAL FTEs		1		1		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)								
	\$	11,109	\$	5,820	\$	(38)	\$	(13)

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Pastoral Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,310	\$	1,320
% of Total Income		85.0%		85.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	172	\$	172
Estate Gifts	\$	1	\$	-
Total Gift Income		173		172
% of Total Income		11.2%		11.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	7	\$	-
Grants	\$	52	\$	54
Miscellaneous	\$	-	\$	-
Total Other Income		59		54
% of Total Income		3.8%		3.5%
TOTAL INCOME		1,542		1,546
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	267	\$	231
FTEs		3		2
Race Relations	\$	408	\$	326
FTEs		4		4
Pastor-Church Relations	\$	410	\$	470
FTEs		3		3
Abuse Prevention	\$	146	\$	143
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	180	\$	186
FTEs		1		1
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,411	\$	1,356
Total Program Service FTEs		12		11
% of Total \$		98.5%		97.8%
% of Total FTEs		92.3%		91.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	21	\$	31
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		21		31
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		1.5%		2.2%
% of Total FTEs		7.7%		8.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	1,432	\$	1,387
TOTAL FTEs		13		12
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	110	\$	159

**World Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,900	1,525	750	-	4,175
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	352	2	-	1	355
Inventory	35	-	-	-	35
Prepays & Advances	11	-	-	-	11
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	526	16	478	1,020
Equities	-	343	11	437	791
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	70	-	-	-	70
PP & E	595	-	-	-	595
Other	57	-	-	-	57
Total Assets	3,020	2,396	777	916	7,109
Accounts Payable	443	130	-	-	573
Notes/Loans Payable	58	-	-	-	58
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	328	-	-	-	328
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,318	-	-	-	1,318
Total Liabilities	2,147	130	-	-	2,277
Net Assets	\$ 873	2,266	777	916	4,832
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Restricted Land Gift \$70				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Resettlement Fund \$1,400 - Legacy Fund \$599 - Insurance Fund \$101 - Endowment/Annuities \$166				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted Gifts \$689 & Unitrust				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments				

**World Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual		Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,623	\$	4,810
% of Total Income		36.9%		38.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	5,424	\$	6,218
Estate Gifts	\$	1,139	\$	775
Total Gift Income		6,563		6,993
% of Total Income		52.3%		55.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	716	\$	145
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	635	\$	624
Total Other Income		1,351		769
% of Total Income		10.8%		6.1%
TOTAL INCOME		12,537		12,572
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,362	\$	3,352
FTEs		42		37
Asia	\$	3,650	\$	3,155
FTEs		25		25
Latin America	\$	3,348	\$	3,470
FTEs		33		29
Europe	\$	700	\$	629
FTEs		14		9
Education	\$	608	\$	575
FTEs		7		7
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,668	\$	11,181
Total Program Service FTEs		120		107
% of Total \$		87.0%		86.3%
% of Total FTEs		89.7%		88.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	851	\$	811
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	894	\$	962
FTEs		9		9
Total Support Service \$		1,745		1,773
Total Support Service FTEs		14		14
% of Total \$		13.0%		13.7%
% of Total FTEs		10.3%		11.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	13,413	\$	12,954
TOTAL FTEs		134		121
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(876)	\$	(382)

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2004				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ -	\$ 1,717	\$ 611	\$ -	2,328
CDs, Time Deposits	-	4	-	-	4
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	187	-	-	187
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	655	249	276	-	1,180
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	18	-	18
Equities	-	1,155	310	23	1,488
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	83	-	126	-	209
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	738	3,312	1,341	23	5,414
Accounts Payable	1,137	-	-	-	1,137
Notes/Loans Payable	10	-	-	-	10
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	394	-	-	-	394
Deferred Income	72	-	-	-	72
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,613	-	-	-	1,613
Net Assets	\$ (875)	3,312	1,341	23	3,801
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments as stipulated by Board = \$2,534 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$778				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$126 Gifts rec'd for subs years = \$958 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$257				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments				

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 02-03 Actual	Fiscal 03-04 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	8,897	\$ 9,970
Estate Gifts	\$	1,568	\$ 976
Total Gift Income		10,465	10,946
% of Total Income		76.1%	77.6%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	3,160	\$ 2,448
Miscellaneous	\$	134	\$ 720
Total Other Income		3,294	3,168
% of Total Income		23.9%	22.4%
TOTAL INCOME		13,759	14,114
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Overseas programs	\$	7,956	\$ 7,978
FTEs		54	61
No America programs	\$	929	\$ 872
FTEs		8	10
Disaster relief programs	\$	3,220	\$ 2,403
FTEs		8	8
Education	\$	445	\$ 446
FTEs		2	3
	\$	-	\$ -
	\$	-	\$ -
	\$	-	\$ -
	\$	-	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$	12,550	\$ 11,699
Total Program Service FTEs		72	82
% of Total \$		84.2%	82.4%
% of Total FTEs		79.1%	81.2%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,165	\$ 1,152
FTEs		8	8
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund Raising	\$	1,198	\$ 1,354
FTEs		11	11
Total Support Service \$		2,363	2,506
Total Support Service FTEs		19	19
% of Total \$		15.8%	17.6%
% of Total FTEs		20.9%	18.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	14,913	\$ 14,205
TOTAL FTEs		91	101
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(1,154)	\$ (91)

REPORTS OF AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a unified report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies and educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports appear in alphabetical order using the agency's name. Supplementary reports may be provided, if needed, at the time that synod convenes.

Writing these reports is an exercise of accountability that is appropriate in our life together as a denomination. Much of what is written is provided as information for synod. Some of the material provides a background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. In either case, these reports really are the story of what God is pleased to do through the agencies of the church. As you read the material, we invite you to join us in thanksgiving for ministry opportunities and for the many fine people who serve on your behalf at home and around the world.

Peter Borgdorff
Executive Director of Ministries
Christian Reformed Church in North America

I. Introduction

Synod has given The Back to God Hour the mandate to:

give leadership in media missions and to supervise the production of denominational radio, television, and other electronic programs, which express the Reformed faith in response to . . . need for conversion, edification, and cultural direction . . . and it is required to give leadership to the denomination as a whole and its congregations in the use of available communication media.

II. The board of trustees

A. Function

The Back to God Hour is governed by a regionally representative board that meets three times a year to set policy and to evaluate the work of the staff.

B. Officers of the board

The officers of the board are Rev. Robert Heerspink, president; Rev. R. Scott Greenway, vice president; Ms. Willa Beckman, secretary; Rev. Allen Petroelje, treasurer.

C. Board member nominees

(Nominations will be submitted following The Back to God Hour Board meeting in February).

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd quartile

III. The Back to God Hour ministries

In a complex and needy world, The Back to God Hour uses radio, television, telephone, and the Internet to proclaim the historic Christian faith. People respond to the message of the gospel by phone, mail, e-mail, or, in some cases, by walking to a Back to God Hour follow-up center or to a local church identified with The Back to God Hour. Back to God Hour staff and trained volunteers supply literature, help people find a church home, refer people to Christian counselors, as well as pray with and for people. Prayer requests are sent to a network of partners who covenant to pray regularly.

In a world of rapidly changing technology and ministry opportunity, the staff continues to evaluate potential ministries in languages or media not currently used by The Back to God Hour for appropriate recommendation to the board or synod. Currently, ministry is carried on in the following:

A. Arabic-language ministry

The Back to God Hour maintains a cooperative ministry with Words of Hope, (Reformed Church in America) and Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) for electronic media ministry to Arabic speaking people. The joint ministry maintains production studios and follow-up centers in Larnaca, Cyprus; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon. Interest is great concerning this

ministry that addresses societies heavily influenced by Muslim belief and culture. A new Arabic language ministry website helps address this interest. The Back to God Hour provides consultation regarding television production to the Sudan Council of Christian Churches to assist them in proceeding through an unprecedented open door for broadcasting in this Muslim dominated country.

B. English-language ministry

1. The Back to God Hour weekly half-hour radio program proclaiming the historic Christian faith is heard on every continent in the world. Rev. David Feddes addresses contemporary society with timeless truth. The Back to God Hour English-language ministry is heard on nearly one hundred North American stations, on over eighteen major stations in metropolitan areas in Nigeria, as well as on short-wave radio around the world. A follow-up center in Nigeria has been organized in concert with world missions personnel and indigenous church leaders to follow up with those who respond to the broadcast. This past year, six congregations in Nigeria joined the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria as a result of discussions initiated by congregational leaders after they heard The Back to God Hour broadcasts and wished to associate with a denomination that embraced the same worldview. In February, The Back to God Hour Board approved a strategic initiative that will continue the process of moving resources from the North American English radio budget to fund international media ministries. The reasons for continuing the movement of resources include: (1) the need for religious programming outside of North America compared to the abundance of religious radio programming available in North America, (2) the potential for a much larger audience for the monies expended, (3) the changing role of half-hour radio programming within the North American culture, and (4) the response that our international programs are enjoying.
2. The news-magazine format television program, *Primary Focus*, airs on CTS in Ontario and select stations in western Canada. It is also carried in the United States on over eighty local commercial stations. This year, *Primary Focus* was distributed on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), and over one hundred local PBS affiliates have aired at least thirteen *Primary Focus* programs.
3. The Voice of Life radio station (ZGBC), located on the island of Dominica, covers the eastern Caribbean Islands. This year, the operation of the station was turned over to an indigenous group on the island. This marks a wonderful transition to local ownership and operation.
4. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over four hundred thousand copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional). This past year, a decision was made to discontinue distribution of printed copies of *The Radio Pulpit*. The Back to God Hour will continue to supply a limited number of printed copies of individual sermons. Both the sermons and the *Today* publication are available on The Back to God Hour website and by e-mail subscription.

5. The Back to God Hour's two animated programs for children, *The First Easter* and *The Prince of Peace*, were licensed to others and produced in Arabic and Portuguese this past year. The animation programs are broadcast in four languages and are available in DVD and VCR formats.
6. *Kids Corner* radio program is now heard on over 220 stations in North America as well as throughout the eastern Caribbean islands. The production of a new series of Kids Corner programs with new characters and a new format began airing in spring 2004.

C. *Chinese-language ministry*

Twenty-six provinces in China are home to over 1.1 billion people. Seven super-power stations located outside the country beam the gospel to China in Cantonese or Mandarin.

Alliance Radio staff in Hong Kong work with The Back to God Hour to provide follow-up and listener contact for the sixteen programs produced each week. The Back to God Hour Chinese programs are also heard in major metropolitan areas in Australia, Belize, Canada, New Zealand, Panama, and the United States. In some of these areas, the programming is bilingual. The Internet ministry is proving to be a valuable tool in ministering to Chinese persons, in spite of attempts to curtail its use in some locations. Special attention was given this past year to evaluate the need for and potential of children's programming in Chinese. Plans are being implemented for development of new children's programming.

Rev. Jimmy Lin gives direction to this crucial ministry.

D. *French-language ministry*

The focus of the French-language ministry is Africa and Haiti. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, gives leadership to this ministry. The response to the French-language ministry continues a multiyear pattern of growth. A program devoted to a biblical perspective on women's issues in the African context and hosted by Charlotte Mpindi has been especially popular.

E. *Indonesian-language ministry*

The Back to God Hour Board approved the purchase of new Indonesia ministry headquarters located in Jakarta. These facilities replace a building that had been damaged by floods and whose size was limiting the ministry potential. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaja, our Back to God Hour Indonesian broadcast minister, gives leadership in developing closer ties to the Indonesian churches. The website continues to be a very important part of this ministry.

F. *Japanese-language ministry*

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the electronic media ministry in the Japanese language. This technologically advanced culture shows signs of opening up to the gospel. This past year, God opened a door for broadcast on a large commercial station in metropolitan Tokyo. This is the answer to many prayers. In addition, the response to children's programming continues to bring joy.

G. *Portuguese-language ministry*

Radio, television, telephone, and the Internet are components of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. The office in Campinas,

Brazil, is responsible not only for production and distribution of all the Portuguese-language programs but also for production of Back to God Hour Spanish-language television programs. The Presbyterian Church in Brazil and many of its congregations are significant partners in this ministry. This past year, a short two-minute program broadcast during the news sparked many responses and contacts for the Presbyterian Church.

H. Russian-language ministry

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, Calvin Theological Seminary graduate and a native of Moscow, gives leadership to this ministry.

The Back to God Hour ministry to the Commonwealth of Independent States is part of a coordinated effort of Christian Reformed agencies to minister in this area of the world. The ministry moved its follow-up center from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Working in conjunction with Christian Reformed World Missions, it is providing materials and seminars for those who respond.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Nearly four hundred radio stations and forty television stations carry Back to God Hour Spanish-language programming. This ministry reaches Central, North, and South America, as well as Spain.

The Back to God Hour is also committed to reaching the large Spanish-speaking population in the United States. Much of this population is located in major metropolitan centers or along the Mexico-U.S. border. The radio ministry features multiple formats to speak to a variety of different kinds of audiences.

Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership in this ministry.

J. Cooperative organizations

1. The Back to God Hour works closely with RACOM, an agency dedicated to support the ministry of the Back to God Hour.
2. The Back to God Hour contracts with CRC Product Services for publication of selected materials.
3. The Back to God Hour works with selected developing Christian Reformed congregations to raise the visibility of those new church plants through the use of electronic media.
4. The Back to God Hour partners with Crossroad Bible Institute, which provides a correspondence program as part of a follow-up ministry. This program has been very effective in the English language and is now used in French as well.
5. The Back to God Hour and the education department of the board of CRC Publications are collaborating on an educational video series based on selected *Primary Focus* programs for congregational education programs.
6. The Back to God Hour sustains relationships with a variety of churches, agencies, and organizations to provide broadcasting or follow-up in each of the languages.

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Robert Heerspink, president; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, executive director, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

B. That synod elect board members to serve from the nominations presented.

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod's Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

The Back to God Hour

Calvin L. Bremer, executive director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2004, and the February 2005, meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

For the October 2004 meeting, the thirty-one-member Calvin College Board of Trustees met in a retreat held at the Hotel Pattee in Perry, Iowa. The five new board members spent a day in orientation sessions with the board officers and the president's cabinet prior to the arrival of the full board. A plenary session and break-out sessions on board roles and the improvement of committee effectiveness were led by Calvin professor of business, Mr. Robert Eames. The trustees also looked at the Calvin College Statement of Mission in order to focus on the importance of Christian teaching and learning in plenary and break-out sessions led by Mr. David Smith, professor of German and director of the newly founded Kuyers Institute for Christian Teaching and Learning. Board members spent time in committee, business meetings, and recreational team-building activities, concluding the retreat with a Sunday morning worship and communion service. Over one-third of the board membership is new in the past two years. A retreat, planned every two years for the Calvin College board, provides a significant enhancement to effective board member participation and engagement.

Board officers elected for 2004-2005 are: Mr. Milt Kuyers, chair; Mr. Bastian Knoppers, vice-chair; and Ms. Cynthia Veenstra, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary; and Dr. Henry DeVries, Vice President for Administration, Finance and Information Services, treasurer. In the October business sessions, the board approved a 1.9 percent increase in the ministerial allowance amount for ordained faculty members.

II. General college matters

The February 2005 meeting was spent conducting faculty interviews, hearing a report on fundraising efforts, and visiting with retiring executive director of ministries, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

The board also received the written report from the North Central Association (NCA) of the Higher Learning Commission that gives high marks to the college in its accreditation review, which is required every ten years. A twelve-person college committee guided the process over a three-year period and wrote the self-study report. The NCA review requires that all areas must be aligned with the mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities of the college. The college is cited in the report as "mission-driven" in all aspects of governance and function.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty interviews

Twenty-nine faculty interviews were the highlight of the February 2005 meeting. Sixteen were for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations) and thirteen for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Dr. James Jadrich, professor of physics and astronomy, was presented with the thirteenth annual Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. This award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian commitment is readily apparent in exemplary teaching in the classroom. In addition, a cash award is provided for educational opportunities and life experiences that will enrich the recipient's career.

C. Administrative appointments

The college made the following administrative appointments and re-appointments:

1. Gail G. Heffner, M.P.I.A., Director of Community Engagement, two years, half time, effective September 1, 2004.
2. Steven J. Putt, M.L.I.S., Reference and Acquisitions Librarian, two years, effective September 1, 2004.
3. Quentin J. Schultze, Ph.D., Arthur H. DeKruyter Chair in Faith and Communication, three years, effective September 1, 2004.
4. Laura A. Smit, Ph.D., Dean of the Chapel, two years, effective September 1, 2004.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees

The first three-year terms of Mr. Craig Friesema, regular, and Dr. William DeRose, alternate (Region 9); Mr. William Alphenaar, Jr., regular, and Mr. Ralph Katerberg alternate (Region 11); and Rev. Douglas Bratt, regular, and Mr. Donald Sporn, alternate, expire in 2005. They are eligible for second terms and are willing to serve. The Calvin College Board of Trustees recommends their names to Synod 2005 for ratification of second terms.

The second terms of Mr. Robert Koole (Regions 1 and 2) and Mrs. Carol Bremer-Bennett (Region 7) expire in 2005. The following slates of nominees were submitted to the respective regions for vote in the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2005.

Regions 1 and 2

Rev. Christopher Fluit; B.A., Calvin College; M.Div., Calvin Seminary

Rev. Fluit has lived in Ontario and Alberta, Canada, as well as in California and Michigan. He is pastor of Brooks (Alberta) CRC where he is chair of council and a member of several church and community boards. Rev. Fluit has previously served on the Calvin Theatre Company board, the Church of the Servant (Grand Rapids) youth ministry team, and as clerk of council at Faith Christian Fellowship in Walnut Creek, California. He and his wife have two young children.

Alyce Oosterhuis; B.A., Calvin College, M.A., Michigan State University, M.Ed., Ph.D., University of Alberta

Dr. Oosterhuis is professor emerita at King's University College. She has served previously on numerous boards and committees including as program coordinator for the Association of Independent Schools in Alberta, board member of the Pastoral Care Institute of Edmonton, chair of St. Stephen's Doctoral Ministry Committee, and chair of the Edmonton Society

for Christian Education. Dr. Oosterhuis has also been a board member and secretary for Christian Schools International (CSI) and the CSI District II director. She is a member of West End CRC where she currently serves as chair of the pastoral search committee. She also has served as a senator for the Institute of Christian Studies since 1996.

Region 7

Dr. Mary Poel Kruis; B.A., Dordt College; M.D., University of Michigan

Dr. Poel Kruis is a pediatrician by specialty and currently serves as vice president for medical affairs at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Services in Gallup, New Mexico. She previously has served as a board member at Rehoboth Christian School and at Dordt College. Her current activities include membership on the Rehoboth Christian High School board; the nursing advisory committee for the University of New Mexico, Gallup, and on the education committee of the New Mexico Pediatric Society. Dr. Poel Kruis is currently completing her term as a deacon at Bethany CRC in Gallup. One of her sons is a graduate of Calvin and now serves on the staff, while her two remaining sons are current Calvin students.

Dr. Philip Kamps; B.A., Calvin College; M.D., Baylor College of Medicine

Dr. Kamps is an OB/GYN physician at the Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital in Gallup, New Mexico. He has served his church, Rehoboth CRC, as a deacon and an elder and was a delegate to Synod 1995, representing Classis Red Mesa. He has served on the executive committee of the New Mexico Medical Review Society and as a delegate to the New Mexico Medical Society. He currently serves on the finance committee for the board of trustees of Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital and as chief-of-staff-elect.

There is an alternate position open in Region 9. Rev. Gerald Hoek is the current regional trustee. Two nominees were submitted to Region 9 for a vote at the spring meetings. The results of this election will be ratified at Synod 2005.

Region 9 – (alternate position only)

Mr. Gary Meyer; B.A., Calvin College; M.A., Loyola University

Mr. Meyer is a retired teacher and served for forty-two years as a teacher of English at Chicago Christian High School in Palos Heights, Illinois. He is currently serving his third term as an elder at Hope CRC where he is also the editor of the church newsletter. He has served for over thirty years on the Chicagoland Calvin Alumni board, as chair of the Hope CRC pastoral search committee, as well as three terms on the Christian educators planning committee (one term as chair). Mr. Meyer currently spends his time volunteering at the Christian School thrift store, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Shakespeare Theatre. He and his wife, Beverly, and their daughters, are graduates of Calvin.

Mr. Perry Recker; M.Phil., Institute for Christian Studies; M.L.S., University of Pittsburgh

Mr. Recker is a librarian for Saint Xavier University and has served as librarian at Trinity Christian College. He was a founding board member of the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School and has served as an elder at the Friendship Community Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. He is currently

a member of Pullman CRC in Chicago and has served as an elder and as cochair of the classical committee on Race Relations for Classis Chicago South. He has a heart for both Christian higher education and for racial reconciliation and has represented these issues to classis in various ways.

B. Alumni trustee

Mrs. Connie Brummel has served two three-year terms and is ineligible for a third.

The Calvin College Alumni Association will present two names to the Calvin College Board of Trustees for selection at the May 2005 meeting.

C. At-large trustees (see Recommendation VI, B)

The third term of Mr. Milt Kuylers expires in 2005. The board will select the name at the May 2005 meeting and submit it for ratification at synod.

Mr. Stephen Chong and Ms. Cynthia Veenstra have both served two three-year terms as at-large trustees and the board recommends each for appointment to another three-year term.

Mr. Stephen C L. Chong; B.A. Calvin, 1979, J.D. Ohio State University, 1982

Mr. Chong is a partner in the Nardella Chong, P.A. law firm in Orlando, Florida. His specialties include real estate, probate and estates, and litigation in commercial cases. Mr. Chong has published in real estate journals and given presentations at a number of symposiums and bar associations. He was a member of the Calvin College Alumni Association board from 1991-1994 and represented the alumni on the Presidential Search Committee. He and his wife, Sheryl, have five children and are members of the Lake Sherwood Presbyterian Church (OPC) where he has served as an elder since 1986.

Ms. Cynthia Rozendal Veenstra; B.A. Calvin, 1978

Ms. Cynthia Veenstra serves as director of the EXODUS Network, a nationwide realtor referral network that prescreens, evaluates, and recommends realtors who are specialists in real estate and Christian community development. Trained as an elementary education teacher, Ms. Veenstra taught pre-school and first grade in Christian schools in the West Michigan area. She was a CRWM volunteer in Bacolod City, The Philippines, for five years. She is involved in many volunteer organizations, including service as secretary of the Calvin College Alumni Association board. She and her husband, David, have three sons and are members of the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo.

Mr. David Vander Ploeg and Ms. Janice VanDyke-Zeilstra have each served one three-year term as an at-large trustee, and the board recommends each for an appointment to another three-year term.

Mr. David Vander Ploeg; B.A., University of Michigan, 1958, J.D. 1961

Mr. David Vander Ploeg retired in 2001 as the executive director of the Barnabas Foundation, a position he assumed in 1993. He served as executive director of The Back to God Hour from 1988-1993 after a long career in law, specializing in business and estate planning. He and his wife, Sheryl, are life-long members of the Christian Reformed Church, and he has served as a deacon, an elder, and a delegate to synod. They are currently members of the St. Joseph Christian Reformed Church. Their three children are graduates of Calvin College.

Ms. Janice Van Dyke-Zeilstra, B.A., Calvin, 1970

Ms. Janice Van Dyke-Zeilstra is a member of the Lombard (Illinois) Christian Reformed Church where she has served as director of the Coffee Break program. She is president of Darwill and has served on the boards of Timothy Christian School, Elim Christian School, Lombard Christian Reformed Church, the Barnabas Foundation, and as cochair of the Timothy Christian Schools' capital campaign. She has served two terms as an alternate regional trustee for Region 9 for the Calvin College board. Her four children are all graduates of Calvin College.

V. Finance

The board approved the 2005-2006 budget of approximately \$83 million. Tuition was set at \$18,925 and room and board at \$6,685, respectively. This represents a 6.5 percent increase in both tuition and room and board over 2004-2005. Financial aid will also increase by a similar percentage.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure (*italics indicate promotion to that rank*):

1. David M. Crump, Ph.D., Professor of Religion
2. Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Philosophy
3. Janis S. Gormas, Ph.D., Professor of Education
4. Kathi L. Groenendyk, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Communication Arts and Sciences (reduced load)
5. Paul E. Harper, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physics
6. Matthew K. Heun, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Engineering
7. Jennifer L. Holberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English
8. Kendra G. Hotz, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Religion (reduced load)
9. Elizabeth Howell, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology (reduced load)
10. Brian A. Ingraffia, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English
11. Karin Maag, Ph.D., Professor of History
12. Garth E. Pauley, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
13. Randall J. Pruijm, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Mathematics
14. Debra K. Reinstra, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English
15. Charsie R. Sawyer, Ph.D., Professor of Music
16. David I. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Germanic Languages
17. Dianne N. Zandstra, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Spanish

B. That synod, by way of printed ballot, elect the following nominees for membership on the board (terms to begin and end on the convening date of the first full board meeting following the meeting of synod):

At-large trustee

David Vander Ploeg, second term	2008
Janice Van Dyke-Zeilstra, second term	2008
Stephen C.L. Chong, third term	2008
Cynthia Rozendal Veenstra, third term	2008

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod's Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Cynthia Veenstra, secretary

The Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) board of trustees presents this report to Synod 2005 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with great hope and anticipation.

I. Board of trustees

The board met in plenary session in February 2005.

The board officers are Mr. Sidney J. Jansma, Jr., chair; Dr. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, vice-chair; Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary.

Openings on the seminary board will be filled by regional elections and the names of those chosen will be reported to synod for ratification in our supplementary report. The nominees to be presented to the respective regions are as follows:

Region 2

Mr. Henry Bekkering resides in Tabor, Alberta, where he has served numerous terms as elder in First CRC of Tabor. He is a business man who has experience in various capacities in Classis Alberta South and has served as a delegate to Synod 2004.

Dr. Henk Van Andel is completing his final year as president of The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta. He has served as an elder in Inglewood CRC of Edmonton and in various capacities in the world of higher education. He has also served as a synodical delegate on two occasions.

Region 4

Rev. Shawn Brix serves as pastor of Burlington CRC, Burlington, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and most recently served the denomination as a member of the Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry.

Rev. James Poelman serves as the pastor of Redeemer CRC of Sarnia, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, has pastored four congregations, and has served as a synodical delegate on three occasions.

Region 10

Rev. Christopher De Vos is the senior pastor of the Pillar CRC of Holland, Michigan. A graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, he has served as the chair of the classical home missions committee and as a member of the CRC Board of Home Missions.

Rev. Richard Hamstra serves as the pastor of First CRC of Grand Haven, Michigan. A graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, he currently serves as a member of the CRWM executive team (until June 2005) and has served in various capacities at the classis level.

The board recommends that synod also ratify the appointment of the following seminary trustees who have completed one term of service and have been approved by their region for reappointment:

Rev. Ruth M. Hofman (trustee)	Region 11
Rev. Roze M. Bruins (alternate trustee)	Region 11
Rev. Peter L. Padro (trustee)	Region 12
Rev. Xavier Suarez (alternate trustee)	Region 12

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., as president, Rev. Duane Kelderman as vice president for administration, and Dr. Henry De Moor as vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Ronald Feenstra serves as the director of the Ph.D. program; Rev. Donald Byker as the director of field education; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student adviser; and Mr. David De Boer as director of recruitment and financial aid.

III. Faculty

The seminary's faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Although teaching and preparing students for various forms of ministry continues to lie at the heart of their work, members of the faculty also provide education and counsel to many local congregations and broader assemblies, preach regularly, publish scholarly books and articles, attend significant conferences, and in various ways seek to stay attuned to developments in ministries in the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Christ worldwide. We are grateful to God for each and every one of these persons who contribute so much to the health and welfare of our denomination.

At its February 2005 meeting, the board acknowledged the years of faithful service of Dr. Robert C. De Vries and approved conferring upon him the title of professor of Church Education and Director of M.A. Programs, emeritus, effective July 1, 2005 and requests that Synod 2005 also acknowledge this action with gratitude to God.

The board dealt with the reappointment of several faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2005 (*italics indicates change in rank*):

Rev. Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years
 Dr. Dean B. Deppe, Associate Professor of New Testament for two years
 Dr. Ronald J. Nydam, Professor of Pastoral Care *with tenure*

The board interviewed and appointed Dr. Darwin K. Glassford as associate professor of church education for three years subject to interview and ratification by Synod 2005.

In addition, the board requests Synod 2005 to declare that the appointment of Dr. Glassford to teach at Calvin Theological Seminary satisfies the "need requirement" of Article 8 of the Church Order so that the classis to which he makes application may proceed with a *colloquium doctum* and, should that examination be sustained, with declaring him eligible for call as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

The board also approved the appointment of Dr. Claudia Beversluis as adjunct professor of educational ministries and pastoral care for three years, Dr. Howard Vanderwell as adjunct professor of Worship for three years, the reappointment of Dr. Lee Hardy as adjunct professor of philosophical theol-

ogy for three years, and of Rev. Andrew Beunk as instructor for computer-assisted exegesis for one year (2005-2006).

The board approved a number of part-time teaching arrangements for the 2005-2006 academic year and reports for information that the following leaves have been granted:

Dr. Lyle Bierma, spring quarter, 2005-2006 and summer 2006

Dr. Dean Deppe, winter and spring quarters, 2005-2006 and summer 2006

Dr. Ronald Nydam, winter quarter 2005-2006

Dr. David Rylaarsdam, winter quarter 2005-2006 and summer 2006

IV. Curriculum and programs

A. The Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP)

The Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) is a major seminary initiative whose vision is to “offer training and resources for biblically faithful, theologically grounded, culturally relevant and communicationally effective proclamation of the Word of God.” In 2004, over fifty pastors participated in extended learning opportunities and over five hundred additional pastors participated in short-term continuing education events. Major new developments in 2005 include a new mentoring program for preachers and the release of a new website (at www.calvinseminary.edu) that will offer preachers and congregations an exciting array of resources to enhance preaching in the life of the congregation.

B. The Faculty Working Statement on the Nature of Excellence in Preaching

The Faculty Working Statement on the Nature of Excellence in Preaching (see Appendix) is the culmination of a faculty-wide collaborative process. This statement will serve several strategic purposes, including: (1) a guiding document for CTS faculty as it deals with preaching across the curriculum, (2) a tool for preachers to use in their assessment of their own sermons and in mentor-mentee relationships that involve sermon review, and (3) a tool for congregations to adapt for their own purposes as they seek to become better hearers of the Word.

C. Making Connections Initiative

The seminary is pleased to announce the “Making Connections Initiative,” a five-year initiative (funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.) to strengthen the seminary’s efforts in the calling, training, and sustaining of pastors throughout the CRC and beyond. The central concept of this initiative is that *collaboration with others*—making connections—leads to more creative and effective outcomes than working alone. Through the building of collaborative relationships within and beyond the seminary, this initiative seeks (1) to increase the number of promising individuals who enter seminary with a vocational commitment to congregational ministry, (2) to reorient the seminary curriculum around the concept of “Theological Education as Formation for Ministry,” in which *formation* focuses upon the development of the whole person in community, and (3) to sustain both ministry practitioners and seminary faculty through collaborative relationships and mutual learning.

V. Students

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics suggest the impact our school is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church.

Christian Reformed students: 176

Non-Christian Reformed students: 128 (40 denominations)

International (does not include Canadian students): 87 (18 countries)

Programs:

M.Div.: 110

M.A.: 33

M.T.S.: 35

Th.M.: 74

Ph.D.: 31

Denominational candidacy programs: 16

Unclassified: 5

Male students: 243

Female students: 61

VI. General matters

A. *Chapel renovation*

The seminary is grateful to God for a completed chapel renovation project. Thanks to an unexpected and generous gift, the seminary was able to renew the chapel space in 2004. Many elements of the old chapel, including the organ and most of the pews, were incorporated into the new chapel. The new chapel also has marvelous new features, including flexible seating, excellent sound and video capabilities, and a flexible stage area that will accommodate the full range of worship styles and activities in the church today. The seminary is eager to host synodical delegates in 2006 in this new chapel space.

B. *Continuing education*

The seminary is grateful for a continually expanding continuing education program that served four thousand persons in 2004, including the fifteen hundred who attended the Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts. The continuing education program has grown in on-campus offerings as well as in off-site events from coast to coast across North America, including events in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The seminary is grateful for strong collaborations with the Center for Excellence in Preaching and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. We also express our gratitude to the Christian Reformed churches and classes that hosted events in 2004, as well as the colleges (Calvin, Dordt, Trinity, Redeemer) and agencies and programs (Home Missions, Pastor-Church Relations, Sustaining Pastoral Excellence) with which we were able to collaborate. These learning events not only benefit those who attend, but also provide valuable connections between the seminary and these congregations, institutions, and agencies.

We have learned to balance large conferences featuring well-known speakers with small groups learning together over several days or in installments over a period of months. Our notable speakers this year included Rev. Dr. Richard Blackburn, Rev. John Bell, Rev. Frederick Buechner, Rev. Dr. Craig Barnes, and Dr. William Craig. Many of our staff and faculty were involved in

various workshops and seminars as well, which has the added benefit of learning from participants that filters back into the seminary curriculum. In addition to our practice of audiotaping our on-campus seminary lectures, this year we added online video streaming of presentations held at CTS. These audio and video files are available in our lecture archive at www.calvinseminary.edu.

We are encouraged by the interest of pastors and church leaders in continuing education resources, and we look forward to many partnerships in the future. We also are pleased that many of our events include college and seminary students and are integrated into their formation for ministry.

C. *Facing Your Future*

The Facing Your Future program for high school juniors and seniors again generated wide interest in the spring of 2004. Forty-eight nominations were received from local leaders, and thirty-five students participated in the three-week-long program last summer. The program is designed to expose young people to ministry and theology and to awaken and/or deepen the call to ordained ministry. This summer's three-week experience will combine challenging theological education to students in the classroom with experience at one of three ministry-encounter sites in North America.

For a number of years, synod has approved special offerings in our churches for the seminary's operating fund and the seminary revolving loan fund. These have been important revenue sources for the seminary and its students. This year, the seminary will designate these two offerings for the Ministry Incentive Program, a revolving loan fund with a forgiveness clause for those entering ordained CRC ministry and the Facing Your Future program, the high school youth initiative.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., chairman; and Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary; be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That the following trustee appointments be ratified:

Rev. Ruth M. Hofman (trustee)	Region 11
Rev. Roze M. Bruins (alternate trustee)	Region 11
Rev. Peter L. Padro (trustee)	Region 12
Rev. Xavier Suarez (alternate trustee)	Region 12

C. That the following faculty reappointments be approved (*italics indicates change in rank*):

Rev. Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years
Dr. Dean B. Deppe, Associate Professor of New Testament for two years
Dr. Ronald J. Nydam, Professor of Pastoral Care *with tenure*

D. That synod ratify the following appointments of faculty members (subject to interview):

Dr. Darvin K. Glassford as associate professor of church education for three years.

In addition, the board requests Synod 2005 to declare that the appointment of Dr. Glassford to teach at Calvin Theological Seminary satisfies the “need requirement” of Article 8 of the Church Order so that the classis to which he makes application may proceed with a *colloquium doctum* and, should that examination be sustained, with declaring him eligible for call as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

E. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the Ministry Incentive Program and Facing Your Future program).

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod’s Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Ruth M. Hofman, secretary

Appendix

Faculty Statement on the Nature of Excellence in Preaching

Excellent preaching is biblical, authentic, contextual, and life-changing.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
preaching moves from the **text** through the **preacher** into a **specific situation**
toward **the gospel’s goal**.

1. Biblical. Preaching is an exposition of Scripture that proclaims the revelation of God and the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with fidelity to the creeds and confessions of the church.

Through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its particular context and in a broader Trinitarian interpretive framework of Scripture as a whole, the Christian preacher must arrive at the textual message and goal with a view to proclaiming the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This message must reflect not only exegetical engagement with the biblical text but also theological engagement with the broader historical and doctrinal conversation surrounding the text.

Deeply biblical preaching proclaims a transcendent and divine Word from the Lord. In a secular world that believes it can live without God, preaching brings radical news about a bigger world, a new world, the real world. Christian preaching deals with profound, life-and-death matters that have eternal consequences. It is momentous.

Questions to ask regarding a sermon:

- Was this sermon rooted in a particular text of Scripture?
- What was the main point of the sermon? What was the main point of the text? Did the sermon say what the text says (theme) and do what the text does (purpose)?

- c. What did this sermon tell you about Jesus Christ? What did it tell you about what Scripture says about our situation and about God's work of redemption?
- d. How did this sermon deepen your knowledge and/or appreciation of God's Word?
- e. Was the sermon faithful to the central doctrines of the Christian faith and the creeds and confessions of the church?

2. Authentic. Preaching reflects the preacher's commitment to embody the preached word.

In union with Christ and in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, preachers themselves must be suffused with "the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). This deep union with Christ must manifest itself in the form of godliness and integrity on the part of the preacher. Christian preaching has authority, conviction, and passion because its source is not merely the preacher but Christ making his appeal through the preacher.

Questions to ask regarding a sermon:

- a. Insofar as you know this preacher, is there integrity between the preacher's words and life?
- b. Did the preacher's tone and demeanor fit with the message of the text, the purpose of the sermon, and the preaching situation as a whole?
- c. Did the preacher exhibit passion and conviction through the message? (This is not a question about the decibel level of the sermon, but about its power, its resonance, and the sense it gives the listener that this preacher deeply believes the message of the sermon and strongly desires that listeners will know and follow God more as a result of this sermon.)

3. Contextual. Preaching must be sensitive to the cultural and congregational context in which it takes place.

Every congregation lives in a specific habitat, with distinctive sensibilities about appropriate dress, language, ways of talking, music, art, and length of sermon and service. Preachers must be diligent students not just of Scripture but of the culture into which they seek to proclaim the gospel so that the sermon truly engages the listener, creating a true meeting of meanings.

Preaching must demonstrate a deep empathy with the broken condition, the "trouble," the needs, the human situation of those who listen, and proclaim the good news in ways that effectively address that broken condition.

Preaching must be communicatively effective, e.g., clear, interesting, suspenseful, well-organized, poignant, and effectively delivered. In a culture where people are saturated with mass media stimulation that sizzles communicatively, preaching must be communicatively designed to win a hearing and move human hearts. Put negatively, preaching should not be boring.

While authentic Christian preaching must be culturally appropriate, it must also challenge and confront cultures and religions whose worldview is at odds with the kingdom of God. Christian preaching is *in* the world, for the world, yet not *of* the world.

Questions to ask regarding a sermon:

- a. Did the sermon give evidence that the preacher knows this congregation as well as the broader cultural context of non-Christians in the audience? If so, please give examples.
- b. Did the preacher give evidence of a deep understanding of the broken condition, the “trouble,” the needs, the human situation of those who listen, and proclaim the good news of the gospel in ways that effectively address that broken condition? If so, please give examples.
- c. Was the sermon communicationally effective? Was it clear? Interesting? Well-organized? Did the sermon keep your attention? Were there any distractions in the preacher’s delivery?

4. Life-changing. Preaching proclaims the gospel of grace, calling people at once to believe it and to live a new life that fits with it.

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Preaching seeks our continuing conversion, our “dying and rising with Christ” (see Rom. 6:1-11), always acknowledging that this new life comes as a gift of the Spirit and in the context of Christ’s body, the church.

Preaching is always connected with *the church*. Preaching seeks to be part of the Spirit’s work in creating a new people and a new community. Preaching is an act of the church and is one of the means of grace by which Christ gathers and builds his church. Preaching is integrally related to Christ’s purposes for the church, namely, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13), and that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Preaching ultimately goes beyond the church itself and proclaims the kingdom rule of God over all things and the mission of God “to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20).

Questions to ask regarding a sermon:

- a. What was the purpose of this sermon as you heard it?
- b. What did the sermon encourage or empower you to do? What behaviors or attitudes did it confront?
- c. What grace and hope did you hear in the sermon?
- d. In what ways did this sermon build up the body of Christ and you as a part of it?
- e. How did the sermon relate to unbelievers in the audience?

The mission of CRC Publications, as adopted by the board of CRC Publications in 1998, is:

CRC Publications provide resources that call people to follow Jesus Christ by helping them to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom.

The core values that guide the work of CRC Publications are the following:

- Our resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.
- Our resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture that are articulated in the Reformed confessions and expressed in the Contemporary Testimony.
- We will treat each other and those we serve with love and respect.
- Our organizational structure, working environment, and resources will consistently reflect an antiracist perspective.

These statements undergird our work as we attempt to develop and distribute resources that serve the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Jesus Christ worldwide. The ministry of publishing is an increasing challenge as we work in a contemporary world that reflects trends such as the following:

- increasing anti-intellectualism;
- decreasing loyalty to denominations and all institutions;
- increasing expectations of choices in all areas of life;
- increasingly diverse denomination;
- explosion of new technology; and
- increasing needs for Christian literature throughout the world.

The following is a summary of the work, governance, and administrative duties of the CRC Publications ministry during the past year. We welcome synod's suggestions that may help us provide better service to CRC churches so that they can enhance their ministries.

I. Board organization, membership, governance, and other administrative matters

A. Organization

The board of CRC Publications is composed of up to eighteen delegates, one from each CRC region and up to six at-large delegates elected by synod. The board ordinarily meets three times annually, in January, April, and September.

Each member of the board serves on one of four councils: administrative, Faith Alive, periodicals, or World Literature Ministries.

B. Officers

The officers of the board of CRC Publications through June 2005 are as follows: Rev. Michael De Vries, president; Ms. Caroline Blauwkamp, vice president; Mr. Bert Witvoet, secretary; and Mr. Otto Gonzalez, treasurer.

C. Nominations for board members

1. At-large delegates

The following names are presented to synod to fill the three at-large positions on the board of CRC Publications that are to be filled by people from the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

Rev. George Brown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is the G.W. and Eddie Haworth Professor of Christian Education and an associate dean at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. He is a member of Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Rev. Phyllis Palsma from Syracuse, New York, is the minister for leadership development and congregational services for the Synod of Albany of the RCA. She also is a columnist for the *Church Herald*.

Rev. Jim O'Connell from Wyckoff, New Jersey, is the pastor of Wyckoff Reformed Church. He has held a number of volunteer positions in RCA regional synod structure and the denominational structure of the RCA.

2. Regional delegates

The following slates of nominees are being presented to the classes in their respective regions for vote at the spring classes meetings:

a. Region 2

Ms. Anita Veeneman is a former principal of Calgary Christian Elementary School. She earned a bachelor of arts degree in education from Calvin College. She has been involved in Christian education for over twenty-five years. Anita and her husband, Ken, are the parents of two adult children. She is a member of Emmanuel CRC.

Rev. William Nieuwenhuis is the pastor of Rimbey CRC in Rimbey, Alberta. He is a graduate of Dordt College where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in history and political science. He completed a masters of religious education at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan. He served as church educator and ordained copastor at First CRC in Red Deer, Alberta, for eleven years. He has long been interested in and active in youth and adult ministry. He and his wife, Kathy, have two daughters.

b. Region 9

Ms. Mae Cooper (currently board alternate) is a retired accountant with Bank of America. Mae earned an associate degree in accounting and has taken a number of courses at Moody Bible Institute. She has a long history of church and community service including frequent service as a Sunday school teacher. She is an active volunteer with the Care Fellowship group at her church. Ms. Cooper is a member of Fox Valley CRC in Crystal Lake, Illinois, where her husband, George Cooper, is the pastor.

Ms. Veronique Le Blanc is a retired United States Army Major. She received her bachelor of arts degree in psychology with a minor in French from Shippensburg State University. She later returned to college to receive a masters degree in African studies from Ohio University. She

is the vice president and chief operating officer of Tippecanoe Community Health Clinic. She is a member of Lafayette (Indiana) CRC where she serves as a deacon, education team member, and GEMS counselor.

c. Region 10

Rev. Kenneth Baker is the minister of worship and administration at Third CRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He earned a master of divinity from Calvin Theological Seminary and a masters degree in religious studies from McMaster University. He also received a doctorate in ministry from Gordon-Conwell in 2003. He currently serves on the CRC Children and Youth Advisory Committee. He is the chair of the Kalamazoo Anti-Racism Alliance and Based Training Institute Advisory Board. He has held a number of positions in the CRC on the local and regional levels.

Rev. Hendrik de Vries is the pastor of Paw Paw CRC. He has master of divinity and master of theology degrees from Calvin Theological Seminary. He served as general manager of Faith Bookstore in Guam for ten years and started several other bookstores in the area. He has served on a variety of denominational and regional boards and committees. He and wife, Judith, recently returned from a mission tour where they spent thirteen years in Guam translating, producing, and disseminating literature.

D. *Long-range planning*

At its September meeting, the board of CRC Publications provided some strategic guidance for the annual edition of CRC Publications' long-range plan. The board offered suggestions to the staff in the various areas of CRC Publications' ministry. The new long-range plan incorporates, where appropriate, strategies necessary to implement the denominational long-range plan.

E. *Relationship with the denominational structure and denominational plan*

CRC Publications has been a strong supporter of the Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP). In the past, staff members from our agency have been heavily involved in the various cross-agency groups that have been appointed to carry out the plan.

CRC Publications staff has also been heavily involved in the development of the Balanced Scorecard methodology that is being developed to help implement the DMP. The executive director serves on the strategic leadership team, and two staff members serve on the implementation team. CRC Publications is committed to work with other denominational agencies and institutions to help ensure the success of this new initiative.

In addition to this work directly associated with the DMP, CRC Publications works closely with other CRC agencies and related organizations to assist them in their ministry. Examples of this include the following:

- The Faith Alive Department provides all the CRC-developed English publishing resources needed by Home Missions to carry out its ministry.
- We regularly interact with the other CRC agencies to ensure that their resource needs are being met.
- We are developing an increasingly close relationship with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. We copublish a number of products with them, including the recent *Worship Sourcebook*.

- The World Literature Ministries area of CRC Publications works closely with the mission agencies to provide publishing support for their foreign-language literature needs. Most of this work is focused on Spanish language resources.
- *The Banner* regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions.

E. *Relationships with other organizations*

During the past few years, CRC Publications has placed an increased emphasis on developing relationships with other Christian organizations in an effort to increase the impact of our ministry and to enable us to broaden the range of resources we offer. Many of these relationships have proven to be very helpful. Some of the more significant relationships are as follows:

- Reformed Church in America (RCA) – One of the most significant developments during the past year was the agreement to enter into a full partnership with the RCA whereby Faith Alive Resources became the marketing and distribution arm for the RCA. This agreement was implemented on December 1, 2004, and has been working well. This partnership is the next major step in what has been a long-time partnership on a number of fronts. For example, the RCA was a copublisher for both the *LiFE* and *Walk With Me* curricula.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM) – The relationship with the ministries that are part of DYM (Youth Unlimited, GEMS, Calvinist Cadets) are mostly carried out through the Children and Youth Ministries Council, which was established recently by the Board of Trustees to serve as the CRC coordinating agent for ministry to children and youth. CRC Publications serves as the lead agency for this council. Its initial focus was to provide resources (regional conferences, newsletter, consulting, guidebook) to assist churches in providing intergenerational ministry. The Council is currently developing strategies for leadership recruitment and development and for parental involvement in the faith nurture of children and youth.
- Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) – We recently formed a partnership with the Presbyterians for Renewal organization within the PCUSA. This organization, serving approximately four thousand member churches, is a copublisher of *Walk With Me*, and we anticipate an increasingly close, cooperative, and mutually beneficial relationship with this organization. We are also affiliated with the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE), which is an association of local church educators from Reformed/Presbyterian churches.
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church – Our entire catalog, as well as numerous other promotional materials, are sent to the churches of this denomination. This denomination has endorsed our resources to its churches.
- We also are forming partnerships with two associations of CRC staff positions—the Association of Reformed Youth Pastors (ARYP) and the Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE).
- Christian Schools International – We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues. This year, for the first time, we are copublishing a resource for youth on origins.
- Baker Book House – We often copublish books with this publisher.

G. Use of CRC publications resources by CRC churches

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by CRC Publications. In fact, about 85 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. About 70 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our core curricula. While that is high compared to many denominations, it is disappointing that many CRC churches do not place a high value on ensuring that their children are being taught using curriculum written from a Reformed perspective—especially when our new *Walk With Me* curriculum is positively received by churches from many denominations as a high-quality easy-to-use curriculum. The number of churches that use our doctrinal courses is considerably lower than 70 percent.

H. Synodical report on church education

At its January meeting, the CRC Publications Board reviewed the report from the synodical Committee to Study Church Education. This report was of particular interest to our board because of issues such as the item above as well as other related matters.

After discussing this report, the CRC Publications Board approved the following motion:

That the board of CRC Publications expresses appreciation for the report and encourages Synod 2005 to adopt all of the recommendations contained therein.

I. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting, the CRC Publications Board adopted a report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contained several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. About 98 percent of CRC Publications' materials were printed on recycled paper during 2004. We are currently exceeding the goals set by the board.

J. Antiracism

CRC Publications has been an active participant in the effort of the Ministry Council (MC) to respond to synod's encouragement to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC. Several years ago, the CRC Publications Board approved an extensive antiracism plan that was developed by staff. That plan is being implemented by staff.

The board of CRC Publications' president appointed a task force to develop a plan identifying how the board of CRC Publications could become an antiracist board. The report of this task force was approved by the board and contained a number of strategies for helping the board of CRC Publications achieve the adopted vision:

The board of CRC Publications covenants to become an anti-racist community by respecting and valuing cultural diversity as God-given assets of the human family.

K. Salary disclosure

CRC Publications, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
17	2	2nd
16	1	2nd

II. CRC Publications' ministry

A. Periodicals Department

1. *The Banner*

a. General update

The synodically adopted mandate for *The Banner* is to "inform readers about what is happening in the CRC, as well as in the church at large, to provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living, and to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and to the culture of which Christians and the CRC are a part."

The Banner staff, and many others throughout CRC Publications and various support groups, have been very busy during the past year working out the myriad details associated with implementing the decision by Synod 2004 to move toward an every-household *Banner* (EHB) supported largely by ministry share. Seven staff teams were appointed to make sure that all aspects of this change were taken care of from obtaining and inputting names from all the church directories in the denomination, to developing a Web plan for the EHB, to ensuring that we did not exceed the budget adopted by synod, to (most importantly) planning the content of the magazine so that it appeals to a much wider and more diverse reader base.

By way of a significant research project carried out by an outside firm, staff obtained input from *Banner* readers and nonreaders. This data was very helpful in planning the content of the EHB. One important feature of the EHB is that it incorporates the purposes of *CRC Source* and several other agency communication pieces.

By the time that synod meets, several issues of the every-household *Banner* will have been published. We look forward to input from synod regarding how well the EHB is being received.

Last year, synod appointed Rev. Bob De Moor as *Banner* editor. Many people have indicated how pleased they are with the content of *The Banner* under Rev. De Moor's leadership.

Articles receiving the most feedback since synod last met are the following:

- *Chosen Nation or Modest Republic?* by James Skillen (September 2004) – equal amount of pro and con
- *Preaching Against Racism* by David Beelen and *Becoming an Anti-Racist Family* by Laura Carpenter et al. (September 2004) – almost all positive
- *Letters from Iraq* by CRC chaplains (January 2005) – all positive about the article, but many seeking to differentiate their support for the troops from that of the war effort itself

- *Celebrate the Emptiness*, editorial (December 2004) – all positive, including fifteen hundred goats contributed to CRWRC

The network of *Banner* news correspondents continues to be a valuable resource for *The Banner*. Research consistently shows that this section of *The Banner* is one of the most widely read.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For the past several years, synod has helped fund the *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the Korean CRC community through a ministry-share allocation to CRC Publications. The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the content of the magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*.

B. *Faith Alive Christian Resources*

This department, headed by Ms. Pat Nederveld, publishes and distributes resources for all areas of a local church's ministry. This department has a goal to be the first stop for resources for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition.

The work of this department is carried out through several offices:

1. Education Office

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, youth groups, adult small groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of this department.

a. For younger children

By far the most significant project of this department in recent years was the development of a new children's curriculum, *Walk With Me*. This massive project took up huge amounts of staff time and financial resources. Much of the development costs of this curriculum were covered by ministry share because CRC Publications did not have the cash reserves to fund a new curriculum.

We are delighted to report that this curriculum has been received very well by the churches. Because of it, our children's curriculum sales increased by 40 percent compared to the prior year—an almost unheard of increase compared to other denominational publishers. Furthermore, many churches are telling us how much their teachers and children are enjoying the curriculum and how effective it is in nurturing the faith of the children.

The core values of this curriculum are as follows: biblical and Reformed, easy-to-use, kid-friendly, grows faith, builds community, celebrates diversity, and fun. A shortened marketing version of these values is "faithful, friendly, and fun."

At this time, we are exploring the development of a children's curriculum for small church education programs. Many small churches have contacted us saying that our core curriculum does not work well for their situations because of a built in assumption that each church has a certain number children in each class.

Other new resources for children include the following:

- *Safe Keeping* – a course for children on preventing child abuse.
- A thorough revision of *Little Lambs* – a curriculum for 4 - 5 year olds associated with the Coffee Break program.
- More Christmas programs for children.

b. For youth

Our curriculum for youth has undergone substantial revision in recent years, so we did not produce a large number of new courses last year. Significant courses recently released, or soon to be published include the following:

- *I Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith* – a mentoring resource for early teens.
- *Fossils and Faith* – a course for teens on origins (published in cooperation with Christian Schools International).
- *Route 66* – a quick tour through the Bible.
- *Stuff to Know When Cults Come Knocking* – a course on several of the cults.
- *Together: All God's People* – a guidebook summarizing the conferences with the same name and providing a framework for churches that wish to implement intergenerational ministry.

Probably the most important course Faith Alive publishes for youth is the study of the Heidelberg Catechism. The current offering is *Questions Worth Asking*. This course, perhaps more relational than prior courses on the catechism, is well received by many; however, some teachers would like a more traditional teaching style. Staff is considering options for responding to this perceived need.

c. For Adults

In recent years, Faith Alive has substantially reduced the variety of resources that it publishes for adults because of low sales. The only Bible study series that is being refreshed (outside of the Discover Your Bible series supporting the Coffee Break program) is the Word Alive series of intensive Bible studies.

Staff is considering the development of a discipleship program and resource components for adults, young adults, and new Christians that includes such elements as: an introductory study on what is a disciple; worship plans; a planning guide for leaders; and short courses on a number of topics such as Bible reading, prayer, stewardship, spiritual gifts, nurturing children in the home, evangelism, marriage, hospitality, and so forth.

Staff has also decided to promote the Kerygma Bible Study program and resources to our churches. This is a program of intensive Bible studies that came out of the Presbyterian Church USA.

d. For people with mental impairments

The Friendship Ministries board, an independent ministry, continues to raise funds for supporting the development and marketing of resources for people with mental impairments. The two most significant current projects are the following:

- A total revision the basic three-year Friendship curriculum. The first year was published in July 2003. The curriculum is called Friendship Bible Studies.
 - The translation of the curriculum into Spanish.
- e. For people with visual impairments
Working with Pathways International, a ministry in Minneapolis, we continue to expand the list of resources available in Braille. A small ministry-share amount is allocated for this work.
- f. For leadership
This area of our ministry attempts to provide resources for the various categories of church leaders, including pastors, elders, deacons, and others. Many of the resources we offer are endorsed products from other publishers.
The most popular resource in this area continues to be *the Discover Your Gifts* publication. Another recent popular resource is *The Compassionate Congregation*. The most recent product is *The Empty Pew: Caring for Those Who Leave* by Louis Tamminga.
2. Evangelism Office
Our publishing partnership with Home Missions continues to provide the basis for most of the publishing we do in this area. CRC Publications and Home Missions staff meet regularly to chart our course for working together to supply the resources that Home Missions needs to accomplish its strategies for serving the churches.
Most of the publishing work has been focused on developing the Bible studies needed to support the Coffee Break and Men's Life programs. However, the staffs have agreed that, due to declining sales, we would no longer refresh the Discover Life Bible studies product line (supporting Men's Life).
One other project that came out of recent discussions with church planters is a video course that introduces seekers to the CRC.
3. Worship Office
Subscriptions of *Reformed Worship* continue to climb (to more than five thousand).
This office continues to work very closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. In fact, the long-time lead editor in this department, Dr. Emily Brink, is now working two-thirds time for the Institute. Rev. Joyce Borger has been hired by CRC Publications to give direction to this office. Rev. Borger divides her time equally between CRC Publications and the Institute.
The success of *Sing! A New Creation* caused the CRC Publications Board to raise the question of whether we should begin to research the need for, and the advisability of, developing a new hymnal over the next few years. We will be working with the RCA in doing this research.
Staff is currently working on *Sing With Me* (a collection of songs that accompany the *Walk With Me* curriculum) and a book of New Testament songs.
The most significant product published by this office in the past year, published in cooperation with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and

Baker Book House, is *The Worship Sourcebook*, a wide variety of practical worship resources drawn from *Reformed Worship* and a host of other sources. This resource has sold beyond expectations.

C. *World Literature Ministries*

1. Introduction and overview

World Literature Ministries publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in a variety of languages; however, most of its work is done in Spanish. This department is engaged in collaborative planning with other agencies—especially the mission agencies. The work in Spanish is done under the brand name Libros Desafío.

The mission of this ministry is:

To serve the church and society by producing high quality, relevant, thought-provoking, creative, and life-changing Reformed literature.

Rev. Alejandro Pimentel is director and managing editor for World Literature Ministries. Since coming on staff, Rev. Pimentel has been engaged in a basic review of all aspects of this ministry. Among the things he has changed or is exploring to save costs and ensure an effective publishing program are the following:

- Outsourcing the editorial function to contract editors.
- Setting a goal to eventually produce and /or reprint up to twenty books a year.
- Seeking and promoting indigenous authors.
- Finding ways to reduce printing costs.
- Ensuring that designers are familiar with the Hispanic culture and are as cost effective as possible.

The staff now reports to the CRC Publications Board through the World Literature Ministry Council made up of board members and agency staff who are involved in ministry with people who are Hispanic, both in Latin and North America.

The impact of this ministry is considerable. For example, last year about thirty thousand books were sold to church leaders throughout Latin and North America. If, for example, each person purchased two books, that means that fifteen thousand leaders were impacted by this ministry. If one takes into account all the people these leaders influence, the overall impact on God's kingdom is considerable!

2. The publishing work

Some of the significant current projects of Libros Desafío include the following:

- *Acts of the Apostles* (Bruce). New edition. Scheduled for fall 2005.
- *Friendship*, Year 1. New Spanish title. Scheduled for spring 2005.
- *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Clinebell). New edition. Now available.
- *Biblical and Theological Foundations for Marriage and Family* (Maldonado). Revised edition. Scheduled for summer 2005.

- *Calvin's Institutes*. New Spanish edition. Scheduled for fall 2005.
- *CNT: Revelation* (Kistemaker). Last volume of the Hendriksen-Kistemaker New Testament Commentary Series, the only N.T. exegetical commentary from the Reformed tradition in Spanish. Now available.
- *Chaos of the Cults* (Van Baalen). Revised and expanded edition. Scheduled for December 2005.
- *Confesiones de fe de la iglesia* (Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions). New edition. Scheduled for fall 2005.
- *CRC Church Order* (Spanish electronic and printed editions). New title. Scheduled for spring 2005.
- *Created in God's Image* (Hoekema). New title. Scheduled for spring 2005.
- *Getting to the Other Side of Grief* (Zonnebelt-Smeenge and De Vries). New title. Scheduled for January 2005.
- *More than Conquerors* (Hendriksen). Revised edition. Scheduled for spring 2005.
- *Systematic Theology* (Berkhof). Revised edition. Scheduled for December 2005.
- *The Minister as Diagnostician* (Pruyser). Scheduled for summer 2005.
- *The Universe Next Door* (Sire). New title. Scheduled for summer 2005.
- *Transforming Mission* (Bosch). Reprint with new cover. Scheduled for February 2005.

3. Non-Spanish languages

With the exception of Korean, Russian, Haitian Creole, and Spanish books, all publications in other languages are being converted into electronic format and will be offered for free on CRC Publications' website.

We are currently working with our CRWM partners in Haiti to produce a second edition of Marian Schooland's *Leading Little Ones to God*.

Several years ago, we transferred all publishing in the Korean language to the Korean Council. That group has moved aggressively in translating and publishing resources, most of them Bible studies from the Discover Your Bible series, into Korean. It also works closely with a Korean publisher, also called CRC Publications, in distributing these materials in Korea. It has also formed relationships with people in China to publish and distribute some of these materials in China.

The Korean Council has published other important CRC materials into Korean, such as the Church Order, the Heidelberg Catechism, and so forth.

E. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include customer service, promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting. Mr. Tim Postuma serves as marketing director for CRC Publications.

The primary vehicle for communicating about our products to the churches is our annual catalog. However, we use a variety of other strategies to do this because not all the people who need to know about our resources have ready access to our catalog. It is increasingly difficult to stand out among the clutter of promotional pieces that churches receive from publishers. Sales from our

website continue to increase; they are now approximately 10 percent of our total sales.

It is becoming clear to staff that personal contact with churches and use of technology will be increasingly important marketing strategies in the future. We are developing plans in these areas.

The most significant project of this department this past year was promoting the new *Walk With Me* curriculum. As mentioned before, the sales of this curriculum have far exceeded expectations.

This department has seen a significant increase in sales per marketing dollar in recent years.

As can be seen from the chart below (reflecting FY 03/04 sales), the CRC's publishing ministry is much broader than our own denomination; more than half of Faith Alive accounts and sales for our English-language products are to non-CRC churches. This fact, we believe, speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Denomination	Active Customers	Percent	Sales	Percent
CRC	850	22	\$1,299,000	49
Other denominations	2504	63	\$1,081,000	40
Bookstores/schools/distributors	594	15	\$288,000	11
TOTAL	3,948	100	\$2,668,000	100

E. *Personnel matters*

The CRC Publications staff team is made up of about thirty-five employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The staff council is a management group made up of the executive director—Mr. Gary Mulder—and the department heads: Rev. Bob De Moor, Periodicals Department (*The Banner*); Ms. Pat Nederveld, Faith Alive Department; Rev. Alejandro Pimentel, World Literature Department; Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services; Mr. Tim Postuma, Marketing Department; and Ms. Jane Ippel, Customer Service Department.

F. *Finances*

The CRC Publications Board remains firmly committed to the goal that CRC Publications' ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that there may always be projects undertaken (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This situation has traditionally been true for our World Literature Ministries Department.

At the time when CRC Publications decided to develop a new curriculum, it became clear that it had not accumulated sufficient cash reserves to pay for the development of this curriculum. The other CRC agencies and synod agreed that some ministry share should be allocated to CRC Publications for that purpose. This year, this ministry share will be transferred to the Periodicals Department to support the every-household *Banner*.

CRC Publications long-term financial health will, to a large degree, depend on continued healthy sales of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. Initial responses of churches to this curriculum seem very positive. However, the long-term prognosis for these sales is unknown at this point.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2004. These reports have been

submitted to the denominational financial coordinator for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2005—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The CRC Publications Board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 2006.

III. Recommendations

A. The CRC Publications Board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

Rev. Michael De Vries, president

Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*

Rev. Bob De Moor, editor in chief

For Faith Alive

Ms. Pat Nederveld, director

B. That synod take note of the following decision of the CRC Publications Board regarding the report of the synodical Committee to Study Church Education:

That the board of CRC Publications expresses appreciation for the report and encourages Synod 2005 to adopt all of the recommendations contained therein.

C. That synod recommend the Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support for 2006.

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod's Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

CRC Publications

Gary Mulder, executive director

I. Introduction

A. *Christian Reformed Home Missions: Following Christ. In Mission Together.*

It is called a tagline—a short phrase that offers a keyhole-size view into what makes Home Missions tick. “Following Christ. In Mission Together.” Short, to the point, and memorable. Two short statements that express volumes.

The new tagline is important for two reasons. First, it proclaims sincerely that Home Missions follows Jesus’ example in ministry: serving others, caring for lost people, having compassion for those who have not heard the good news. “Following Christ” links to the wide perspective of Home Missions’ first core value: “God’s redeeming love for the world and its people inspires us to participate in his mission.”

Second, Home Missions’ new tagline states clearly that this ministry is shared. It is about partnership with CRC members, congregations, classes, and ministry agencies to move Christ’s mission forward.

Back in the 1970s, to better partner with congregations and classes, Home Missions initiated grants-in-aid for church planting, campus ministry, and mission assistance to established churches. Now more than ever, led by the Board of Trustees’ ministry priority endorsed by synod and the CRC agencies’ ministry plan, the CRC is engaged by the vision of healthy congregations’ contributing to the renewed vigor and mission of the whole denomination and its ministries. “Following Christ. In Mission Together” connects with that vision.

B. *A new day in Home Missions*

1. Vision, mission, goals

This year Home Missions adopted the following new statements to better express the mission of Home Missions from the perspective of working with and within CRC congregations and classes.

CRHM Vision – Every Christian Reformed church, ministry, and member follows Christ in reconciling the world to God.

CRHM Mission – Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ’s mission.

CRHM Goals – Christian Reformed Home Missions

- creates and supports partnerships who pray for, equip, and multiply believers, new churches, mission-focused churches, and educational ministries.
- develops and provides resources that serve to strengthen local ministries, leaders, and supporters.

2. Reorganizing Home Missions’ work

In the fall of 2003 and throughout 2004, Home Missions implemented reorganization plans endorsed by the CRC executive director of ministries and the Board of Home Missions to better carry out Home Missions’ synodical mandate and the mission statement noted above.

- a. The Home Missions binational office in Grand Rapids, Michigan, reorganized to unify resources and congregation ministry support.

The former new-church, established-church, and campus ministry departments are now brought together in the *ministry development team*. This team (fifteen persons), led by Rev. Willis (Bill) Van Groningen, integrates church planting and development, mission-focused churches (established-church support), campus ministry, small-groups and prayer ministry, leadership development, and smaller-churches ministry.

Ministry teams (team), led by Rev. Allen Likkel, supports Home Missions’ regional ministry teams throughout Canada and the United States. This team (three persons) administers all Home Missions grants. Home Missions regional leaders (formerly intercultural directors and regional directors) are part of the ministry-teams department.

Home Missions’ *ministry advancement team* (five persons), led by Mr. Tom Bratt, leads Home Missions’ fundraising and communications efforts.

Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director, leads the Home Missions integrating team that unites and focuses the work of department teams and reports to the Home Missions board.

- b. In 2004, regional ministry teams have been formed and are beginning to work in twelve regions of the CRC. Led by Home Missions regional leaders (formerly intercultural directors and regional directors), these teams integrate regional Home Missions staff and local and classis leaders to cast mission vision; set goals; support church planting, local church mission, and campus outreach; and participate in recommending budget allocations for new and continuing partnership grants. Selected regional ministry teams also have responsibility to advance Asian, black, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic ministry.

The regional teams and team leaders are:

Black and Urban, Bob Price	Korean and California South, Tong Park
Chicagoland, Vacant	Native American and Red Mesa, Stanley Jim
Eastern Canada, Ben Vandezande	North Central USA, Larry Meyer
Eastern USA, Drew Angus	West Central USA, Jerry Holleman
Great Lakes, Ben Becksvoort,	West Coast, Peter Holwerda
Hispanic and SE USA, Gary Teja	Western Canada, Martin Contant
Hispanic and SE USA, Stan Workman	

C. *Evangelizing progress in 2004*

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God’s grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,374 persons through evangelism in 2004. (*Yearbook 2005*, p. 153) That compares to 2,939 persons in 2003 and 2,650 persons added through evangelism in 2002. Emerging congregations reported 960, or 28 percent of the total. The 156 emerging congregations represent 15 percent of the total of 1021 congregations.

The total reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church was 273,220 (*Yearbook 2005*, p. 151) compared to 275,708 last year. This despite the fact that member additions, 11,161, were 4,013 more persons than reported member decline, 7,148 persons. Other factors contribute to the total membership number besides reported persons added and persons leaving membership.

II. Board and executive committee

A. Board

The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod charged with guiding and carrying out the denominational home missions program. In 2004, the board was reorganized to include twelve regionally based members (matching CRCNA regions), with the primary functions of governance and strategic direction. Five members-at-large will balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy / nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees.

	Delegates	Alternates
Region 1	Victor Chen	Henry De Vries
Region 2	Phil Reinders	Ron Klok
Region 3	Sam Cooper	Peter Runia
Region 4	Gary Bomhof	Ellen Van Til
Region 5	Clair Abee	Eleanor Rietkerk
Region 6	Paul Vander Klay	Cor Pool
Region 7	Rod Hugen	Ernie Benally
Region 8	Mark Brouwer	Marcia Allspach
Region 9	D.A. Crushshon, Sr.	Harley Ver Beek
Region 10	Peter Byma	Paul Bakker
Region 11	Mary Buteyn	Jerome Burton
Region 12	Sheila Holmes	Beth Fylstra
Members-at-Large		
Charles Brown (Intercultural)		
Mark Feldkamp (Advancement)		
Emma Kee (Finance)		
Allan Kramer (Real Estate)		
(One vacancy)		

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Ms. Mary Buteyn, president; vice president, vacant; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (executive director); Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, secretary; and Ms. Emma Kee, assistant treasurer.

The officers of the Canada board for 2004 are Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, president; Rev. Henry Devries, vice president; Rev. Andrew VanderLeek, secretary; Mr. Peter Runia, treasurer; and Mrs. Ellen VanTil, assistant secretary-treasurer. Officers for the 2005 Canada board will be elected at the February 2005 meeting.

C. Salary disclosure

Executive persons are being paid within the approved salary ranges.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
16	2	2nd
15	1	2nd

D. Retirement

Rev. Henry Wildeboer retired from his position as regional leader for Eastern Canada in January 2005.

III. Ministry development

A. Introduction

The ministry development team explores today's intellectual and social trends to identify mission opportunities. Noting demographic shifts as well as changing attitudes and aspirations, the team revises and refines Home Missions' strategies and programs and seeks to identify new resources. The goal is to help increase the CRC's character and capacity for mission in North America.

The ministry development team focuses on supporting local congregations and classes in the work of mission. It helps them plant new churches, assists in developing mission-focused goals and organizational structures, offers partnership support for campus ministries (including mission schools among the Navajo and Zuni people), helps identify and train leaders for mission, and equips small group leaders and prayer coordinators, all bolstered by a steady flow of consultation and encouragement.

In the details that follow, please note that the character of Home Missions' work reflects abiding commitments to ongoing spiritual formation as the wellspring of mission to be an indigenous example of the Reformed tradition here at home, to highlight that mission is always local (though situated in and supported by wider collaborations and partnerships that contribute to a mission movement), and to realize more fully the CRC's multicultural vision.

B. Mission-focused churches

North American culture worships the extraordinary at the expense of the ordinary. As participants in that culture, we are inundated with the celebration of the extraordinary, the cult of superstar worship. The obsession with the extraordinary distorts our understanding of the collective power of the ordinary. It is commonly accepted that to achieve success one must become extraordinary; to reach one's potential it is necessary to stand out from the crowd.

Despite this massive media barrage, ordinary people continue to live ordinary lives. Their ordinary acts of kindness often go unnoticed by news reporters. They are not often recognized by awards, fanfare, or memorials. In spite of this, ordinary people expressing their ordinariness in an ordinary moment do more to impact the lives of others than extraordinary people can do in a lifetime.

Apply this image to the church. Imagine the mission impact of ordinary Christian Reformed congregations who understand that God's primary means for accomplishing his mission on earth is through his grace flowing through them.

As CRHM moves into a new chapter of ministry with congregations, formerly known as established churches, Home Missions encourages them to view themselves as mission-focused churches and to see and celebrate the outbursts of God's grace in and through their ordinary ministry.

The vision and ministry of ordinary Christian Reformed churches is the basis for partnerships in which Home Missions provides:

- encouragement to pastors as part of learning communities;
- facilitation leadership to congregations as they discern God's leading for their future;
- cooperative leadership with classical leadership groups;

- ministry networks for smaller churches, leaders, and larger mission-focused churches;
- smaller church grants (to twenty-six smaller churches for program grants, to seventy-five smaller churches for continuing education, to thirty-seven smaller churches for technology upgrades);
- grants to two Heritage churches;
- partnership staffing grants to nineteen churches.

C. *Church planting and development*

After a long tenure as leader of church planting and development, Rev. Allen Likkel assumed the new role of director of ministry teams in May 2004. After a comprehensive search, Ms. Denise Stevenson was appointed as church planting and development leader. She began her work with Home Missions on October 18, 2004.

In its simplest form, Christian Reformed Home Missions' church planting strategy calls for churches to plant churches. This is the best strategy for reaping the greatest harvest. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands us to "make disciples of all nations." The following is a modern-day example of disciple-making church planting:

GAP Community Church, pastored by Rev. John Zayas, is an indigenous congregation that was parented by Grace and Peace Fellowship in inner-city Chicago. Pastor Zayas received training through Home Missions' Leadership Development Network. For nine years, he served with Young Life and for eight years with his parent church pastor, Rev. Pedro Aviles. As further example of their commitment to serve, Pastor Aviles currently serves as LDN leader in Chicago while Pastor Zayas is a mentor for local church pastors. Grace and Peace serves as a natural parent where the vision for a new church began within the church itself. In other cases, churches serve as foster or adoptive parents where the vision begins elsewhere, but the churches participate by providing resources directly to a new church plant in a variety of ways.

God continues to provide wonderful church planting leaders from diverse backgrounds. This year, ten ethnic and nine Anglo pastors and ten ethnic and eight Anglo churches were added. While the membership of the CRC is diversifying, there is a deep sense of unity around the gospel and the desire to plant culturally relevant new churches that are biblical and Reformed.

Home Missions enjoys a partnership with all the other agencies and institutions of the CRCNA. Through an interagency church planting goal team, key resources are combined from various agencies to help achieve the following goal of the Denominational Ministries Plan: "CRC denominational ministries will serve congregations and classes by encouraging and supporting a denomination-wide movement that extends our kingdom witness for Jesus through increasing our capacity to plant up to 30 churches a year."

CRC Growth through Evangelism 1995-2005*

Yearbook year	All churches	Newer churches
1995	2489	1102
1996	3170	890
1997	2846	1238
1998	2738	795
1999	2777	614
2000	2462	534

2001	3005	633
2002	2563	596
2003	2650	686
2004	2939	541
2005	2421	460

*Based on 46 church planting and development (CPD) churches reporting and 848 non-CPD churches reporting as of 1/7/05

Gradually, the CRC has been learning to plant churches among people “where they are,” fully expecting that when they become brothers and sisters in Christ, they will be enfolded—along with their new congregations—into the Christian Reformed Church. All new churches are begun with the commitment to “bring the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States, and draw them into fellowship with Christ and His church” (Home Missions mandate).

1. Key church planting strategies

Home Missions helps churches plant churches by means of the following key strategies:

a. Prayer mobilizing and communication

Communicating the vision for a church planting movement and mobilizing prayer for enfolding people into fellowship with Christ and his church is a vital part of the process of church planting and development.

The *Deep Roots/New Branches* video package and the Lord of the Harvest prayer challenge reinforce this mobilization. Additional prayer resources distributed to planters and /or CRC congregations are the monthly *PowerLink*, the quarterly *Networker*, various Web resources, and other materials and networks.

b. Resourcing partners, planters, and new churches

Home Missions helps classes and congregations cast vision and develop specific strategies and plans for starting new churches. One of the primary factors is selecting a qualified leader and helping that leader make a good beginning. Some of the key parts of that process are:

- Residency (for persons new to ministry or lacking planting experience)
- Coaching (wisdom, accountability, support)
- Bootcamp (an intensive planning and training week)
- Orientation (3.5 days at the binational office)

As the new churches develop, various denominational helps are available. Home Missions’ services include:

- *Navigating the Growth Matrix* (church planting video)
- Small group trainers and consultants
- Peer church planter learning forums
- Research information gathering on new migration and immigration trends

Home Missions thanks God for the church planters and their families who have answered the call of God to plant new churches. The following statistics show church planting results as of January 7, 2005:

Church planting/development*	2004	2005
Churches reporting	49	46
Main worship attendance	4561	3514
Total members**	3098	1846
Growth by evangelism	541	460
*Based on 46 church planting and development (CPD) churches reporting		
**Confessing members		

Diversity of church planting and development leadership is evidenced as follows:

Ministry Leaders – 1988-2004	European-American	Ethnic	Total
1988-2001 (13 years)	95	115	210
2002-2003 (2 years)	27	26	53
2004 (1 year)	9	10	19
Total	131	151	282
New Churches – 1988-2004	European-American	Ethnic	Total
1988-2001 (13 years)	99	134	233
2002-2003 (2 years)	16	16	32
2004 (1 year)	8	10	19

c. Financial partnering for church planting

Financial support is a key part of Home Missions' partnership with new churches. However, as funding availability declines, partnerships with classes and other sources increase. Today, Home Missions provides grant funding for up to six years to church plants located in majority-culture communities and ethnic-language communities. For new churches in communities characterized as high need, Home Missions' funding may continue for up to twelve years, and even longer in exceptional circumstances.

2. New and continuing partnerships for ministry years 2004 and 2005

Frequently, as noted below, the actual start is preceded by a period of grant funding for residency prior to the launch of the new church. New-church starts, residencies, and funding conclusions for the following periods are listed below:

New Work: Ministry Year 2004

Location/Ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Site start	Funding end
Anaheim, CA/Sae Soon Church	K	Suil Kim	2003	9/03	2006
Bellflower, CA/Grace Filipino – Anaheim	F	Elmer Tandayu	1998	7/03	2006
Grand Rapids, MI/Monroe Mall	A	Henry Schenkel	2002	9/03	2006
Jackson Heights, NY/Gracia	H	Arturo Olguin	2004	7/03	2006
Kitchener/Waterloo, ON/The Journey	A	Adrian VanGiessen	2003	7/03	2006
New Brighton, MN/New Life	L	Phonh Sinbondit	1999	8/03	2006
Olathe, KS/Pathway Community	A	Kevin Schutte	1998	7/03	2006
Ridgefield, NJ/The Tree of Life	K	Kook Sung Kim	2003	7/03	2006
Sioux City, IA/Lao Unity	L	Keo Phommarath	2002	7/03	2006
Socorro, TX/Valley Ridge Comm	H	Jose Rayas	2002	7/03	2007
Valencia, CA/Hope International	A	Eric Molina	2001	7/03	2006
Walker, MI/The Gathering	A	Paul Worster	2001	11/03	2006
West Valley City, UT/Cambodian	C	Charlie Phim	2003	7/03	2006

New Work: Ministry Year 2005

Location/Ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Site start	Funding end
Anaheim, CA/Hope of the World	K	Sang Myeun Moon	2004	1/04	2007
Athens, ME/River of Life	A	Tony Brown	2004	7/04	2007
Blacksburg, VA/All Nations (Campus)		Chan Mun Jeong	2005	1/05	2007
Bradenton, FL/E. Bradenton CPD	A	Don Ridder	2004	7/04	2007
Cochrane, AB/Annex	A	Robin Bailey	2004	7/04	2007
Centennial, CO/E. Hills Multi-Cult.	M	Henry Serrano	2003	6/04	2006
Dover, NH/Indonesian Fellowship	I	Harold Michael Lapian	2004	1/04	2007
Holland, MI/Northern Corridor	A	Jeff Meyer	2005	10/04	2007
Kalamazoo, MI/Kalamazoo Area	A	Recruiting			
Lacombe, AB/Wolf Creek	A	Andy Geleynse	2005	10/04	2007
Los Angeles, CA/Joy Community	K	David Suh	2004	1/04	2007
Los Angeles, CA/Gardena City Harvest	B	Lawrence Bennett	2003	7/04	2007
Los Angeles, CA/LA Global Community	K	Theodore Lim	2004	1/04	2007
Ludington, MI/Lakeside Chapel	A	G. DeMey, G. Kett	2004	12/03	2007
Pasadena, CA/Gateway	H	Daniel Mendez	2003	8/04	2007
Paterson, NJ/Paterson Hisp	H	Guillermo Godoy	2004	10/04	2005
Richmond, BC/The Tapestry	M	Albert Chu	2004	1/04	2006
Sacramento, CA/Bridge of Life	A	David Lindner	2004	7/04	2006
Seattle, WA/Sanctuary	A	Randy Rowland	2004	4/04	2005
Traverse City, MI/Traverse City	A	Recruiting			

Residencies

Location/Ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Started	End	Est. plant start
Bowmanville, ON/Rehoboth daughter	A	Martin Spoelstra	2003	2006	5/05
Burlington North, ON/Burlington-Orchard	A	Leo Gatotos	2000	2006	2/05
Folsom, CA/River Rock	A	Derek Zeyl	2002	2006	7/05
Long Beach, CA/Church on X Street	M	Ryan Verwys	Nonfund	NA	7/03
Sacramento, CA/Living Stones	A	Marc Holland	2001	2006	12/05
Thornapple Valley/Standing Stone Comm.	A	Burt Bolt	2004	2006	12/04

Funding Conclusions: Ministry Year 2004

Location	Ministry leader	Ministry concluded	Premature date ended
Azusa, CA/Azusa Comm. Harvest		X	9/14/04
Denver, CO/Sun Valley	Elias Burgos	X	6/1/04
Grand Rapids, MI/Iglesia Paz y Esperanza	Augusto Liza	X	TBD
Hamilton, ON/Hamilton Asian Comm	Salim Arthur	X	8/31/04
Los Angeles, CA/Abundant Life Korean	Dong Il Kim	X	10/26/04
New York/Lighthouse		X	TBD
Wixom, MI/Harvest Fellowship	Vance Walker	X	12/31/04
East Hartford, CT/Hartford Hispanic	Carlos Aranguiz		
Claremont, CA/Bethesda Hispanic	Albino Melendez		
Sunnyside, WA/Iglesia Evangelica	Gerry Muller		
Chicago, IL/Many Peoples Comm.	John Hoekwater		
Sioux Falls, SD/Heartland Community	Jim Hoogeveen		
Mukilteo, WA/Evergreen Community	Steve Kim		
Whittier, CA/Grace Filipino – Carson	Elmer Tandayu		

*KEY: B = Black, F = Filipino, L = Laotian, H = Hispanic, K = Korean, C = Cambodian, N = Native American, M = Multiethnic, A = Anglo, I = Indonesian

3. Identified church planting and development sites

The need for church planters is urgent. The following locations have been approved and are awaiting leaders: North London, Ontario; Bay Area, California (Asian); Coachella, California; Southern, California; Walnut Creek, California; Fountain Valley, California (restart); Los Angeles,

California (Hispanic); San Joaquin County, California; Santee / East San Diego, California; Simi Valley / Moor Park, California; Vista / North San Diego, California; Becker, Minnesota; Rochester, Minnesota; Des Moines, Iowa; Kansas City (Kansas #2); Georgetown Township, Michigan; Holland, Michigan (Harderwyk); Kalamazoo, Michigan; Traverse City, Michigan; Chicago / Portage Park, Illinois.

Proposed new sites for ministry year 2006 are under review.

The goal of increasing our capacity to plant thirty churches a year is in response to the potential harvest in North America. The greatest need for these new churches is our prayers of intercession, prayers that the Lord would send laborers to the harvest field. From a denominational perspective, ten to twenty new churches are needed annually simply to offset the loss created by congregational mergers, closures, and departures. From a kingdom perspective, twenty to thirty new churches are needed annually to help meet the massive challenge of reaching unchurched and under-churched millions in Canada and the United States.

D. *Educational mission*

Christian Reformed Campus Ministries communities continue to influence North American institutions of higher learning. As they are the primary center for leadership development in today’s culture, the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to be heard and modeled there in a creative, life-giving way. Similarly, the church needs to hear the conversations of the campus in order to be faithful to God’s mission.

1. *Campus ministries*

Campus ministries in the CRC are transitioning toward a deeper integration with God’s mission through the church. A new generation of ministers carries this vision, even as the “old guard” retires. There is also increased emphasis on identifying and nurturing leaders for the mission of God in his world.

Campus ministry foundational documents, a current list of campus ministry locations, and a list of the personnel serving in those locations can be found on the Home Missions website (www.crhm.org).

The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on more than forty campuses in Canada and the United States. Grant renewal amounts are being reduced in order to open up space for new ministries. As of September 2004, twenty-three campus ministries are supported by Home Missions’ partnership-assistance grants. These are:

Central Michigan University	University of Alberta
Chicago State University	University of Calgary
Dalhousie University	University of Guelph
Fanshawe Community College	University of Iowa
Ferris State College	University of New Brunswick
Iowa State University (Anglo)	University of Northern British Columbia
Iowa State University (Korean)	University of Toronto
Kennedy-King Community College	University of Western Ontario
McMaster University	Western Michigan University
Michigan State University	Wilfrid Laurier University & Waterloo University
Passaic County Comm College	Wilfrid Laurier University & Waterloo University
Queen’s University	York University

Regular campus ministry activities include weekly Bible studies for students and faculty; one-on-one counseling; large group worship and/or teaching events; small group discussions; social activities; leadership formation; special lectures and retreats; and, in some cases, a Sunday student worship service on campus. Although many of these gatherings are small, some include hundreds of students.

In addition, Home Missions supports a program of emerging leaders in campus ministries and, when funds are available, partners with Calvin Theological Seminary to support ministry internships on campuses. Calvin College partners with Home Missions-Campus Ministry to cosponsor an annual academic and mission-focused lecture tour on major university campuses throughout North America.

2. New educational mission leader

Mr. Peter Schuurman was appointed to the position of educational mission leader (EML) in October 2003 but began working in October 2004. Schuurman is writing vision and mission material for all Home Missions campus work, which will become foundational for a new website and other prospective media. Together with Rev. Bill VanGroningen, he consults with CRC campus ministries across North America, administers partnership assistance funding, develops ministry standards and evaluation tools for campus ministries, and marshals denominational (and other) resources for campus ministries.

Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, the educational mission leader's office supports a campus ministry journal (*Anastasis*), annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The EML's office supports the CRC's ongoing work toward developing and refining the vision and goals of CRC campus ministry across North America. Together, we track campus ministry trends, explore campus ministry issues and concerns, and help set the course for ongoing mission in higher education.

3. Partnering with Red Mesa schools

Home Missions also assists the Red Mesa Christian Schools Association. The association fosters mutually beneficial programs of support (internal- and external-staff development and donor development) for all of the Red Mesa schools. The association is currently led by a volunteer coordinator, Ms. Kathy Bosscher, the principal of Zuni Christian Mission School.

As the schools continue to renew and revise their mission-focused educational goals, Home Missions is privileged to continue to journey with them in a partnership that demonstrates modest denominational subsidies matched by increasing local ownership. A key initiative at present is the development of a renewed statement of understanding on the longer term partnership of Home Missions and the Red Mesa schools.

E. *Mission-focused leadership development*

One of Home Missions' seven core values declares that "raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God's people for God's work."

1. Prayer

The task of mission-focused leadership development begins with prayer for harvest workers (Matt. 9:38). A January prayer initiative highlights the importance of this prayer. In addition, Home Missions distributes promotional materials and, with the assistance of The Back to God Hour, has developed a church planting video—*Deep Roots, New Branches*—for vision casting and recruiting.

2. Identification

Potential mission-focused church leaders need to be identified and encouraged early on. Home Missions encourages the identification of future leaders through cooperation with Youth Unlimited (specifically the Encounters program), the cross-agency Leadership Development Team, small group leaders, and pastors.

3. Training

Once potential leaders are identified, Home Missions assists in their training:

a. Leadership Development Networks (LDN)

In partnership with classes, Home Missions resources fourteen LDNs. An LDN is a three- to four-year, in-ministry training program available in Spanish or English. The current locations are:

Location	Leader	Participants
Southern California	Albino Melendez	19
New Jersey	Ramon Orostizaga	29
West Michigan	Carlos Tapanes	8
Central California	Paul Vander Klay	5
Chicago	Pedro Aviles	12
Heartland	Jim Hoogeveen	12
Southern California	Al Breems	10
Southern California	Andy Choh	15
Texas	Mike Johnson	13
Maine	Bill Johnson	7
North Jersey	Ricardo Orellana	7
Wisconsin	Rob Sizemore	12
Denver	Peter VanElderen	17
Eastern Ontario	Ben VandeZande, Barb VanGiesen, Kevin DeRaaf	14
Total Trainees		175

Three new LDNs are being developed: Skagit Valley, Seattle, and Calgary.

b. Masters degree in missions

Home Missions joins Calvin Theological Seminary and Reformed Bible College to offer a distributed education (online) program to bring accredited education to the student. Home Missions has loaned Dr. Gary Teja to the seminary one day per week to act as the director of this program. Twelve to fifteen students are currently enrolled. Each of them was oriented for online education by taking the on-campus Introduction to Church Planting course taught by Rev. Jim Osterhouse and Dr. Gary Teja.

c. Internships

On-site training takes place through internships. Nonformal internships refer to training that is not coupled with formal education. Formal internships are crafted in conjunction with seminaries. Academic internships are available for online students.

4. Directions

Once a mission-focused leader has been identified and trained, Home Missions determines where this person can best fulfill a missionary calling. Directions is an evaluation process that includes a three-day intensive assessment to determine the passion and giftedness of the individual. Home Missions also provides assessment interviews. Teams around North America have been trained to conduct these intensive four-hour evaluations.

5. New initiatives

- a. An assessment consultation group—an informal covenant among agencies to serve leaders by helping them discern their best placement for service in God's kingdom.
- b. A peer forum of leaders who excel at identifying and training leaders in the context of the local church.
- c. A task force to explore the profile of second-step pastors (pastors who can take a new church to the next level after the church planter has moved on).

F. Prayer and small group development

The area of prayer and small groups is a challenging and rewarding ministry through which God is changing people. Listen in on some attendees at the February 2004 prayer conference:

- I want to integrate more effectively prayer in life and ministry.
- It was good to meet with other people involved in classis leadership and prayer. To see the excitement that the church has for prayer is important and was very good for me.
- I realized a sense of greater connection and involvement in a larger process—the developing of prayer in our denomination.

Also read these testimonies from the July Small Group Evangelism Conference:

- I have really been enriched and renewed in God's Spirit.
- I feel totally transformed by the Holy Spirit.
- This event dared me to enter the chaos of my community.
- I cannot wait to go home and harvest for our Lord and Savior.

These brief comments bring joy but also the realization that they represent only a handful of participants.

Substantive changes occurred in the area of prayer and small group development, due in part to Home Missions' organizational redesign. These changes will create an atmosphere for better teamwork and increasing capacity for mission. In addition, the themes of spiritual disciplines, Reformed

identity, increased mission through team, and mounting multicultural vision receive attention.

Churches are resourced and equipped in a variety of ways, such as through the Home Missions website (www.crhm.org) and through print and electronic publications including *Connections*, *Small Talk*, *LifeLine*, and *Prayer Paper*. Home Missions' partnership with CRC Publications and Faith Alive Christian Resources remains strong as the CRC is served with resources on small groups, prayer, and evangelism.

Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism. Nearly 3,500 people participated in 110 events in 2004. CRHM partnered again in providing the West Michigan Prayer Conference and a training event for classical prayer coordinators in February. The July Small Group Evangelism Conference, held in St. Catharines, Ontario, equipped and encouraged 1,300 women in their ministry of small groups and evangelism. CRHM small group regional representatives throughout Canada and the United States interact with pastors, councils, ministry team leaders, and a variety of small group leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry. Home Missions partners with Calvin Theological Seminary and with other organizations such as MOPS International, National Coalition of Men's Ministries, the denominational Prayer Leaders Network, and the Classical Renewal Ministries Team to assist their efforts in prayer, small groups, and evangelism.

One major development is the redeployment of small group representatives to serve on regional ministry teams throughout the United States and Canada. Small groups and prayer are being integrated into a broader category of spiritual formation. The biennial Small Group Evangelism Conference is planned for Long Beach, California, in the summer of 2006. The conference will welcome leaders of all types of small groups—men and women from the whole range of CRC cultures and ethnicities.

IV. Ministry teams

Excellent progress has been achieved in forming regional teams for each of the twelve regions of the CRCNA. The Home Missions regional leaders have recruited, gathered, and begun mobilizing their respective teams for ministry. The regional teams focus primarily on supporting church planting and development, mission-focused churches, and educational ministries within their regions. They help those that are underway as well as work to promote new opportunities.

CRHM provides financial support through partnership grants for church planting and development, mission-focused churches, educational mission, smaller churches, leadership development networks, internships, and academic scholarships.

Due to Home Missions' reorganization, regional allocations and partnership grants are now processed by the regional teams and reviewed by the director of ministry teams. The teams have processed proposal requests for FY 2006 and are strategizing the best ways to serve their respective churches and classes.

In the current fiscal year, Home Missions provides grant funding as follows:

Church Plants (Includes two parent-church grants and three residencies)	83
Mission-focused Churches	
Mid-size Church Support	
– Outreach Staff Grants	19
Smaller Church Support	
– Salary Subsidy (FSC/Heritage Churches)	12
– Technology/Program/Continuing Ed	138
Educational Mission	26
Leadership Development Networks	14
Internships	8
Academic Internships	10

For the coming fiscal year, there are proposals for thirty-eight church plants (including two for parent-church assistance), fourteen mission-focused church grants, and two leadership development network grants.

V. Ministry advancement

A. *Financial resources*

Home Missions ministry share grew by 3.6 percent (\$170,149) totaling \$4,882,912. Above-ministry-share gifts also increased, growing by 9.8 percent to \$1,454,267. Estate gifts experienced a decrease of \$353,460 (48%). This significant decrease erased gains made in ministry share and above-ministry shares, resulting in a decrease in total revenue of 0.8 percent from the prior year. Home Missions is extremely thankful for the generous support of all ministry partners this year and gives thanks to God for them and their faithfulness to Home Missions.

B. *Personnel*

Mr. Tom Bratt continues to provide leadership for ministry advancement. Development officers Ms. Susie VanderGriend and Mr. Nelson Grit left the employ of Home Missions. Mr. Corey Watt was hired as a development officer in November 2004. Home Missions notes with gratitude that along with a paid staff, a number of volunteers continue to support God's mission both in the binational office and with funded ministries.

C. *Communications*

Home Missions uses a variety of means to communicate with its various audiences. The Internet has become an increasingly important part of the communications mix. The Web is used to convey information such as news, prayer needs, donor opportunities, and so forth. Home Missions' websites include:

www.crhbm.org – Christian Reformed Home Missions
www.missionfocusedchurches.org – Mission-focused Churches
www.menslife.org – Men's Life
www.coffeebreakministries.org – Coffee Break
www.smallgroupministries.org – Small Group Ministries
www.newchurchnet.com – Church Planting and Development
www.minhisp.org – Hispanic Ministries
www.crhmcampusministries.org – Campus Ministries

Worship bulletins and related material in English, Korean, and Spanish are made available to the churches for Easter and Reformation Day. Many churches received an offering for Home Missions on those Sundays. The *2004 Report to Donors*, which included testimonials and donor names, was sent to all donors in November. In addition, one *Gathering* magazine and several *Update* and *On a Mission* newsletters were published. Material for *CRC Source*, *Prayer Guide*, and bulletin announcements was provided. All Home Missions material is available for downloading from www.crhm.org. Home Missions board members and board alternates receive a monthly e-mail newsletter called *First Friday Focus*. Home Missions also provides speakers for the Women's Missionary Union tours.

VI. Classical renewal

Home Missions is a founding partner agency of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team that has supported classis vision leaders with needed resources since 1992. The team builds on current experiences and practices in our renewing classes by partnering with them to share success stories and key learnings about ministry at the classis level. Prayer support and other means of mutual encouragement—including a quarterly newsletter and website—are key emphases of this work.

This past year, the team continued to partner with twelve classes in a mutual learning covenant; hosted an annual conference for eighty classis leaders in Des Plaines, Illinois; increased classis participation in the classical prayer coordinator network; and hosted two peer groups for classis staff and ministry team chairs. Further work is being planned in the areas of connecting classes to regional teams, helping classes define church planting development goals, strengthening leadership development efforts of classes, and sponsoring key healthy classes as mentors to those that need encouragement to engage in renewal work. Rev. Thea Leunk serves the team as a .75FTE classis coach.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Mary Buteyn, Home Missions board president, and Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday and Reformation Day Sunday as significant opportunities to receive an offering for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Home Missions is blessed, privileged, and profoundly challenged to join in God's mission with all of the Christian Reformed congregations and with Christian Reformed ministry agencies and schools.

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod's Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
John A. Rozeboom, executive director

I. Introduction

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) has been linking with other Christian groups for decades. The task of telling the world about Jesus is far too large for one denomination. When Christians work together, however, God is honored, and the task is more manageable.

In El Salvador, *Seeds of New Creation* (the name of the country team, composed of BTGH, CRWM, and local partners ministering in El Salvador) is a great example of collaboration. After El Salvador's civil war, distrust and suspicion ran high. *Seeds* began building relationships with other evangelical groups in the capital city and across the country. Now, Christians meet for fellowship, encouragement, training, and shared ministry opportunities. *Seeds* is the glue that holds it all together. *Seeds* has developed The Network for Integral Missions with about sixty pastors and church leaders participating in special training and becoming agents of change in their communities. These men and women are truly being *Seeds of New Creation*.

All over the world, Christian Reformed World Missions collaborates with other likeminded believers to tell a dying world about the living God and what he did through his Son, Jesus. Here is a partial list of organizations CRWM works with:

English Language Institute – China (ELIC)
Educational Resources and Referrals – China (ERRC)
Jian Hua Foundation
Evergreen Family Friendship Services
Yew Chung Education Foundation
International Theological Education Ministries (ITEM)
The Bible League re Alexander Munro
East-West Ministries (Russia)
Excelsis – secundment agreement
Evangelical Association of Guinea
Fédération des Associations de Jeunesses de L'UEBH (FAJ)
Haitian Partners for Christian Development (HPCD)
Consortium de la Renforcement de l'Education Chrétienne en Haiti (CRECH)
Haitian Christian Reformed Church (HCRC)
RCJ Eastern Presbytery – Interdependence Guidelines
Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ)
National Presbyterian Church of Mexico
United Bible Societies (UBS re Kees de Blois)
Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)
Synod Mission Board of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (India)
Asian Theological Seminary – Bacolod
Asian Theological Seminary – Manila
Faith Academy (Philippines)
Philippine CRC – Classis Metro Manila
Association of UNELA (Costa Rica)
UNELA (Costa Rica)
Nicaragua Christian Academy
NKST (Nigeria)

The Christian Reformed Church has much to offer the world in the ongoing work of God's kingdom. With such able partners, though, is mission ministry still necessary? The answer to that question becomes a clear yes when you consider these facts from some countries where Christian Reformed World Missions works:

- Mali: One million of West Africa's twenty million Fulani people live in Mali. There are thirty-five known Christians among them. That means nearly 100 percent are Muslim. How will they hear unless someone preaches the gospel to them?
- Japan: There are 280,000 members of the Jehovah's Witness Church in Japan and 3,900 members of the Reformed Church of Japan. These two groups together make up less than 2 percent of the population of the Land of the Rising Sun, which desperately needs to know the risen Son.
- France: The Roman Catholic Church is losing influence here. Baptisms of children declined from 75 percent of all children in 1970 to 20 percent in 1999. Islam is the second religion of France. Evangelical Christians are few. There are fifty million French people with no real link with a Christian church.
- Nicaragua: Natural disasters, war, tyranny, and more have driven many Nicaraguans to find hope in God. Yet, Nicaragua is a deeply divided country. The church has a huge role to play here.
- Nigeria: As more and more Avadi people come to Christ, missionaries move into the background to do mentoring, training, and discipleship. Avadi Christians take over evangelism and outreach. Missionaries work in many areas of Nigeria; some out front, some behind the scenes, but all for God's glory.
- China: Imagine, just a few short years ago we did not even know that a group of believers existed in the area where the earliest CRC missionaries went to work in 1921. After decades of communism, contact has been reestablished. Now, with the CRC's help, an actual church has just opened where those missionaries labored for so long. Ongoing contact with Christians from outside has been healthy and good for this group.
- Hungary: There are immense opportunities in Hungary after decades of communism, but the church is not prepared to respond to the new day here. Training of leaders, encouragement, and vision is needed. It is exactly what CRWM is offering.
- El Salvador: El Salvador had some hard years. Since then, however, it has been living up to its name, which means "the Savior." In 1960, evangelical Christians were a mere 2.3 percent of the population. In 2000, they were 22 percent. Missionaries are not leading the way in El Salvador; they are partnering, offering help and encouragement in critical ways as the country seeks to extricate itself from a messy past.

II. Review of 2004

Much happens each year as a result of the CRC's efforts around the world. Here are ten events worth noting that took place last year:

A. The Nicaragua Christian Academy neared completion of a daughter campus for Spanish speaking Nicaraguans who want a Christ-centered education. The school will open in 2005.

B. The Hikarigaoka Chapel opened in Japan. In a land that is less than 2 percent Christian, the construction and opening of a new church is a tangible sign that God's kingdom is advancing in the Land of the Rising Sun. The conversion process is slow in this nation, so when enough new believers arise to need a place to worship, it is a cause for celebration.

C. The Rugao Church in China completed construction of a new building and held its grand opening in May. The new church seats eight hundred comfortably; one thousand uncomfortably. The cross atop the new church can be seen from miles away, which is a testimony in itself because very, very few crosses are seen in China. This church is a city on a hill.

D. The number of believers in the Muslim stronghold of Mali is growing. It is slow growth, but it is growth. In the last five years, the number of believers among the Fulani has grown from nine to thirty-five. Missionaries there are convinced that they are on the cusp of a large movement of Fulani into God's kingdom.

E. In the emerging Covenant Christian Church among the Avadi in Nigeria, seventy-five baptisms took place in the past year, and seventeen additional villages have requested evangelists to be posted in their areas.

F. Church-based HIV-AIDS programs in Nigeria, such as Beacon of Hope, appear to be making a difference. The latest numbers indicate that the rate of HIV infections is leveling off or possibly even decreasing. To enhance its program, Beacon of Hope was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from USAID.

G. In partnership with the Reformed Church of Carpathian Ukraine, a Ukrainian-speaking Reformed congregation was established in the town of Mukachevo. Pastor Leonard Hanykovics has assumed responsibilities for the new church plant. Fifty people attended the opening service of the new church building in July.

H. The Go Guide was completed. This is a brand new manual for short-term mission teams written from a Reformed perspective.

I. Some thirty-five college-age young people from a variety of churches had life-changing experiences this summer in seven different countries through the Encounters/SMP program. Plans are in the works to place a new SMP (Summer Mission Program) team in Mexico next summer.

J. In response to the appeal that went out in February, churches and donors pulled World Missions back from the precipice of an \$800,000 deficit to end the year with a deficit of just \$200,000.

III. Looking ahead

God has his people in every nation and tribe. We as a denomination are privileged to work with many of them in our efforts to tell the world about Jesus. This year, and in years to come, Christian Reformed World Missions will continue to recruit and send the best the CRC has to offer as change agents in our world. Christian Reformed people will teach and preach and evangelize and dig wells and meet with small groups, not as lone-ranger missionaries but as an extension of our denomination and in close cooperation with likeminded

Christians who are just as committed to getting the task done. We will work with Christians in China and in Nicaragua; we will be part of *Seeds of New Creation* in El Salvador—all for the glory of God.

IV. Report on mission fields and projects

A. Africa

1. Nigeria

a. The Church of Christ among the Tiv (NKST)

Year	Worship attendance
1911	0
1936	25
1941	214
1957 (church organized)	23,000
1964	100,000
1979	200,000
2004	300,000

b. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)

Year	Worship attendance
1920	0
1957	5,600
1970	19,000
1979	60,000
2004	60,000

c. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN)

This denomination split from the CRCN. Although the two denominations were able to reconcile their relationship in 2003, they remain two denominations.

Year	Worship attendance
1979	60,000
2004	80,000

Twenty-five years ago, World Missions' ministry in Africa was almost entirely focused on the NKST and CRCN. Today, only a small fraction of World Missions' human and financial resources are engaged with these large partner churches. The bulk of World Missions' resources in Africa have been redirected to new work among unreached peoples.

d. Covenant Christian Church of Nigeria (CCCN)

Year	Organized Churches
1984	0
1995	3
1997	5
1999	8
2001	12
2002	13
2004	14

This emerging church (CCCN) among the two-hundred thousand Avadi in the eastern Kambari area of Nigeria has twenty additional worshipping sites, four primary schools, and a Bible school.

Missionaries work with Nigerian evangelists from partner churches to

meet the training and discipleship needs of the CCCN at the same time as the CCCN tries to respond to seventeen more villages asking for evangelists.

2. Guinea

Year	Worship attendance
1984	Work began
1989	3
1994	10
1999	18
2004	30

3. Mali

Year	Known Fulbe Christians Related to WM's work
1984	0
2000	9
2001	14
2002	19
2003	27
2004	35

We believe the events in Guinea and Mali mimic the early days in Nigeria. Just as there was much more happening in the early years for the NKST and CRCN in Nigeria than could be seen in the number of converts or people attending worship, much more is happening among the Fulbe than is presently seen. The Word is going out as missionaries teach Muslim Fulbe to read, as Fulbe villages watch the Jesus film, and as hundreds of thousands of Fulbe have the opportunity to hear radio programs in their own language. We are encouraged as the number of "firstfruits" continues to increase in Guinea and Mali, and we pray for a movement among the Fulbe as Fulbe Christians increasingly serve as evangelists within their culture.

4. Liberia

Although civil war forced the evacuation of missionaries from Liberia in 1990, ministry has continued through grants to our partner organization, The Christian Education Foundation of Liberia. The Bassa Bible passed its final checks and is being printed by the United Bible Societies.

5. Sierra Leone

Year	Worship attendance
1979	0
1984	400
1989	1,000
2004	500

Church attendance is down after years of conflict and war. Nevertheless, World Missions is responding to training requests coming from those who survived the war with their faith intact.

B. Asia

1. Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, we partner with already existing churches and institutions to enhance their ministries of theological education and Christian community development.

- The College of Christian Theology of Bangladesh is one of the largest nonresidential training institutions in the world. Our resources are focussed on the development of their new master of arts program and their theological library.
- We assist CRWRC in developing the values formation aspect of their work. This focuses on the Christian principles of community development and the role of the churches in it.
- A joint project with Calvin College, CRWRC, and World Vision on spirituality and leadership was initiated with CRWM personnel responsible for the program development. This project trains Christians to integrate word and deed ministries.

2. Guam

Our primary ministry, Faith Bookstore, has been transferred to the ownership of a local church. CRWM has phased out of direct ministry on Guam.

3. China

Our purpose is to connect CRC resources with ministry opportunities in China.

- Ministry and property on Taiwan have been transferred to a local seminary.
- In China, we partner with North American agencies to send English teachers to Chinese universities. We had a record number of forty-five teachers this year.
- We partner with Calvin College by providing a director for their one-semester off-campus program in China.
- We are involved in a number of ministries with local churches and Christian institutions. The new church structure in Rugao, which we assisted in building, was dedicated in May 2004. We also assisted in the renovation of a training center for evangelists.
- A three year Sunday school curriculum is nearing completion.

4. Cambodia

Ministry is planned here but has not yet been initiated.

- The Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia is an association of eighty-eight churches and Christian agencies in Cambodia. They would like our assistance in building their capacity to provide leadership training to their members.
- CRWR-Cambodia is asking for a person to assist in providing theological leadership and direction to their community programs and staff.

5. Japan

Our work focuses primarily on church development in partnership with the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ).

- We work at 10 mission posts. Our last full-year report indicates a total attendance goal of 305 (actual 302), communicant members goal of 232 (actual 232), seeker-regular visitor goal of 15 (actual 50) and leaders-in-training goal of 34 (actual 50).
- A new schedule of transfer of each post to the RCJ was approved. This was the first time we have developed such a schedule to help us and the RCJ plan these transfers. In 2004, two congregations were transferred.
- Emphasis is being placed on youth work, missions development, training of Sunday School teachers, and other equipping ministries within the RCJ. A youth ministry has been started; mission discovery tours to Korea, China, and the Philippines have been carried out; Sunday school teacher training materials are being translated; and teacher training sessions held.
- We provide teachers to the Christian Academy of Japan, a large international Christian school in Tokyo.

6. Philippines

Our primary partner in the Philippines is the CRC of the Philippines (CRCP).

- We are drawing to the close of our direct church planting efforts. In our two remaining posts, the congregations have grown significantly, land has been purchased, church buildings built, and leaders trained. The church in Cagayon D'Oro has been transferred to the CRCP, and the one in Tacloban is in the final stages of being transferred.
- Asia Theological Seminary is our primary partner in formal theological education. We provided resources to both their Manila and Bacolod campuses. The Manila campus provides leadership training for people from all over Asia and is one of Asia's largest theological seminaries. Placing a teacher at Koinonia Seminary in Mindanao enables us to provide some input into the training of Christian leaders in an area of the Philippines that is primarily Muslim.
- The CRCP ministers on five of the Philippine islands. Its total membership is nine-thousand although its active membership is less than that. CRWM's work focuses more now on assisting the CRCP in the development of its leadership and denominational structures and ministries.
- The CRCP sent its first foreign missionary to Cambodia.
- CRWM works with the CRCP domestic and foreign mission department whose goal is to plant seventy churches within the Philippines by 2007.

C. Europe

1. France

After fifteen years of teaching practical theology at the Reformed Seminary of Aix-en-Provence, France, Dr. Harold Kallemeyn turned over

his position to a former student. Dr. Kallemeyn's ministry is now focused on a leadership training program to the twenty-one French-speaking countries in Africa. This program shifted from a five-year testing phase to full implementation in 2004

2. Hungary

Year	Seminary graduates
1952 – 1996	0
1997	20
1998	40
1999	60
2000	80
2001	100
2002	120
2003	136
2004	152

After forty years of communist-enforced closure, the Hungarian Reformed Seminary in Sarospatak reopened in 1992. Since 1997, approximately twenty students each year have graduated from the seminary. Most of these graduates are now ordained pastors serving in churches that had long been vacant.

3. Russia

World Missions' ministry in Russia fits into three major areas:

- a. Maintaining and strengthening evangelical libraries (2,200 users).
- b. Relationships with five partner organizations.
- c. Launching the Christian Teachers' Association.

In addition to overseeing these World Missions' ministries, Gary Timmerman serves as coordinator for all CRC ministries in Russia.

D. Latin America

1. Costa Rica

The Christian Reformed Church of Costa Rica has grown in its commitment and responsibility. Three churches are carrying out holistic and viable ministries in their communities by working with AIDS victims and preventive programs, meals on wheels for the poor, and ministry to elderly people who are often forgotten. The local congregations support these ministries and require very little support from CRWM.

Last year, the Evangelical University of Latin America (UNELA) launched its Ph.D. program for Latin America (PRODOLA). Earlier last year, nineteen students from different Latin American countries gathered in Brazil for intensive in-residence courses. The School of Distance Learning, through partnership agreements, is providing training to hundreds of students throughout Latin America, which includes many CRWM partners. Through UNELA, the Christian Reformed Church is influencing the evangelical church in Latin America with a biblical world and life view.

- UNELA is one of the very few accredited higher learning Christian schools in Latin America.
- UNELA has over five-hundred students enrolled in all its programs.

- The School of Distance Learning serves CRWM partners in Central America and the Caribbean.
- Since last summer, UNELA is offering online courses as part of their distance program.

2. Cuba

Despite many difficulties, the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba continues to grow spiritually in leadership and in numbers. The summer programs that included summer camps for children, teenagers, young adults, and couples went very well. The Christian Reformed Church of Cuba developed a partnership agreement with UNELA to facilitate biblical education and training for its leaders. Seventeen students are enrolled in this program. Some ministry results in the CRC of Cuba are:

- Twenty established congregations.
- Seven ordained pastors.
- Seventeen in-training leaders.
- Five thousand worshippers.
- Strong emphasis on holistic ministries.

3. Dominican Republic

The Christian Reformed Schools (COCREF) are providing more than just good education for Dominican and Haitian children. They are receiving the gospel and coming to know God. This ministry makes it possible for children to receive a high quality, Christ-centered, community transforming education where typically no other educational options exist. COCREF is becoming a model educational system for all the Dominican Republic. The growth and development of this school ministry include:

- Twenty schools.
- One hundred fourteen teachers and supervisors.
- Four thousand students.

CRWM missionaries working with the Christian Reformed Church of the Dominican Republic continue to provide training and encouragement for the major programs on evangelism, church planting, theological education, and diaconal ministries. The goal is to work toward building organizational capacity and self-sustainability. The Christian Reformed Church of the Dominican Republic includes the following:

- Two hundred congregations.
- Ten classes.
- Over nine thousand members.

4. El Salvador

The country team, *Seeds of New Creation*, has developed the Network for Integral Missions with about sixty pastors and church leaders participating in special training and seminars. These sessions are transforming the perspective of leaders who are becoming agents of change in their own communities. Participants in this network are inviting others to meetings on Christian world and life view where fellowship, training, and opportunities for collaboration are offered.

- Ministry teams have been formed in the CRC of El Salvador and are beginning to take initiative and responsibility for their areas.
- The Santa Tecla congregation has decided to step forward into a neighborhood where they can be a part of and serve the surrounding community.
- Thirty pastors and church leaders have participated in the School of Biblical Expositors offered by *Seeds of New Creation* and sponsored by the Latin America Theological Fraternity in El Salvador.
- Three hundred fifty people have been involved in an educational process that fosters an integral view of the ministry of the church and is offered by the *Seeds of New Creation* team.
- The Christian university student movement (MUC) in El Salvador, is increasingly recognized for its contribution to the university. Interest has awoken in the gospel as being something that affects all of life, and several non-Christian students have begun attending Bible study cells on campus.

5. Haiti

Last year was a very difficult year for Haiti. Early on there was political unrest that forced President Aristide to leave the country. The situation worsened, and, on February 25, all CRWM and CRWRC staff, partner teachers, and volunteers were evacuated. Then a series of hurricanes came through the Caribbean Sea and hit Haiti leaving flooding, destruction, and more than two thousand dead. More recently, armed gangs have taken to shooting on the streets.

After almost three years and many frustrating attempts, the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti purchased a piece of land for the construction of a ministry center. This will provide space for worship, training, fellowship, and service to the community.

6. Honduras

On May 28 and 29, 2004, the Christian Reformed Church in Honduras celebrated its National Assembly. Past internal conflicts disrupted unity and prevented the denomination from holding synod for over eight years. Delegates from five classes came together to celebrate their unity once again, to elect new officials, and to organize national committees for the different facets of their ministries. This synod marked a milestone in the reunification of the church. A new classis is being organized in the central region of the country, which will include the churches in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. The CRC of Honduras has grown and developed as a denomination and includes:

- Seventy-three established and emerging churches.
- Five classes.
- Over four thousand members.
- Four seminaries for the training of church leaders, evangelists, and pastors.

7. Mexico

Total population in Mexico is about one-hundred million people, of which only 5.4 percent are Protestant. In 1992, the government legitimized Protestant churches and missionaries who work for them. Since then, a

period of rapid evangelical growth is unfolding. Demographic information on recent church growth suggests that the Protestant population could reach 20 percent by 2030. CRWM missionaries seek to empower both clergy and lay church leaders; to increase growth in existing churches; and to begin new churches, cell groups, and family ministries. CRWM currently has missionaries working in Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Palenque, Merida, and Cancun. Good ministry is taking place in the U.S. border cities and in the southeastern states of Mexico.

8. Nicaragua

The Nehemiah Center continues to work for transformational development in four major sectors: church and families, community development, Christian schools, and business people. The Christian Reformed Church of Nicaragua is showing positive developments in terms of its outreach ministry. Some churches combine word and deed through significant diaconal outreach. Three churches have Christian schools with a combined student body of 550.

- The Nehemiah Center now has its own website at www.nehemiahcenter.net.
- The Nehemiah Center celebrated its first graduation of thirty-two agents of transformation. These men and women are becoming important agents for change based on a biblical worldview in their churches, schools, businesses, and communities.
- The Nicaraguan Association of Christian Schools, birthed by the work of the Nehemiah Center, is taking more and more responsibility for organizing its own training workshops.

V. Ministry in Canada and in the United States of America

While the plans of World Missions' international are focused on field ministry, the plans of World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada are focused on challenging the church to support a vision for worldwide missions. Developing a strong, prayerful, financial, and caring connection with the church and its missionaries and fields and /or countries is integral to achieving that vision. Through e-mail and other technology, contact between the missionary and the church is greatly enhanced.

There continues to be significant variation in the level of passion for international outreach among our church members. Many of the elderly continue to be very loyal and very mission minded. The younger generation tends to be more supportive of ministry that they can be directly involved with; ministry that they perceive will make a difference. To respond to that desire, new avenues of partnering with regions and individuals and developing opportunities for ministry involvement are being explored.

World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada continue to support each other through a joint-venture agreement. Both agencies use a network of regional and local representatives to make the needs and opportunities for ministry known and to nurture the church's passion for the lost and suffering of those outside our borders. These efforts are increasingly being conducted in collaboration with the other agencies and institutions of the denomination.

VI. Program report for recruitment and training

Training programs prepared long-term, short-term, and summer-mission program participants.

Of the support needed by World Missions to keep a missionary family on the field, approximately 40 percent comes from denominational ministry shares. An average of fourteen sending and supporting churches supply most of the other 60 percent through faith-promise and other above-ministry-share support. Individuals also support missionaries directly rather than through their local churches. Individuals' support is important and will be even more important in the future. Short-term partner missionaries and summer-mission participants usually serve for one to two years and do not receive salaries from World Missions. They raise their own support (travel and living allowance) from churches and friends, support themselves, or, in the case of many partner missionaries, are supported by jobs in the countries to which they go.

All of World Missions' fields and projects and 96 percent of its 250 missionaries are connected by way of the Internet to the office and to each other. This connection greatly increases the mission's capacity for communication and distribution of mission news.

The names and addresses of missionaries and regional representatives can be found on the back pages of the World Missions calendar. They are also listed in the Directory of Agencies and Boards in the CRC *Yearbook 2005*, as are the names of World Missions' administrators.

Each year, World Missions pays tribute to missionaries and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In 2004, World Missions honored the following for five to thirty-five years of service to the CRC through World Missions:

Name	Place	Years of service
Paul & Barbara Bergsma	Mexico/Honduras/Costa Rica	35
Faith Bosserman	Liberia/Nigeria/Grand Rapids Office	30
Ted & Josie Boswell	Japan	20
Jan Camburn	Nigeria	10
Cheryl de Jong	Guinea	10
Julie Ebels	Grand Rapids Office	5
Michael & Kim Essenburg	Japan	10
Albert Hamstra	Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Chinese Ministries, Grand Rapids Office	25
Calvin & Jamie Hofland	Guinea	10
Joel Hogan	Philippines/Grand Rapids Office	20
Gerald & Jackie Hogeterp	Canada pastorate/Nigeria	35
Dan & Jeananne Kuiper	Mexico/USA pastorate (12 yrs/prior service in Mexico)	5
Abraham & Elaine Lee	Mexico	5
Ken & Jeannie Lee	Japan	5
John & Anne Span	Guinea	5
Christine Roos	Nigeria	35
Tim & Wilma Palmer	Nigeria	20
Dan & Pat Vanden Hoek	Haiti	15
Mike & Victoria Van Der Dyke	Nigeria	25
Brenda Vander Schuur	Guinea	15
Ken & Sally Vanderwal	Honduras	20
Bernhard & Annemarie van der Vlis	Nigeria	10
Gary & Pam Van Veen	Dominican Republic	15
George & Ruth Young	Japan	25

VII. Collaboration with other CRCNA agencies

In the international outreach effort, World Missions collaborates with The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications/World Literature, CRWRC, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. Especially noteworthy have been the research efforts by all these agencies into new outreach in Latin America (Mexico) and southeast Asia. Calvin Theological Seminary made a vital contribution in the orientation of new missionary candidates. All are working together in support of ministries in various parts of Eastern Europe.

VIII. Governance and administration

The CRWM Joint Board held its annual meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 16-18, 2005. At that gathering, the boards of World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada met separately to attend to matters peculiar to the Canadian and the U.S. contexts. They met jointly to address the common task of governing and overseeing mission fields and projects. The CRWM executive committee meets jointly and separately in May 2005 and again in October 2005.

IX. Strategic planning

World Missions’ long-range plan is available on request. This plan states our vision, mission, purpose, values, mission task, design of fields and projects, deployment guidelines and plans, strategic issues for effective mission, and the force for mission provided by the CRC. This plan is used to shape the annual plan and budget. As stated previously, we are currently engaged in a significant review of the plan to find ways of integrating it more closely with that of the CRC.

Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 2005—Financial and Business Supplement*.

X. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
17	1	2nd and 3rd
16	4	2nd and 3rd

XI. Recommendations

World Missions-Canada and World Missions-U.S.A. respectfully recommend the following:

- A. That the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. John Tenyenhuis; the president of World Missions-USA, Rev. Ronald Meyer; and the World Missions executive director, Dr. Gary Bekker, be given the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and represent World Missions to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.
- B. That the Board of Trustees and synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to pray for and take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod's Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

Christian Reformed World Missions
Gary J. Bekker, executive director

I. Introduction

In Micah 6:8, we are told that God requires us to act justly and to love mercy. Similar commands are found throughout the Bible, but how do we best respond to these passages and live them out in our lives? That is the question that the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has been grappling with for over forty-two years.

Our answers have been to work together to help disaster victims, to promote justice, to feed the hungry, and to help people overcome poverty. At the same time, however, we are helping communities around the world become examples of living justice and loving mercy in their own relationships and actions. We feel that developing such communities is the best way for God's love for the world to be made known.

This past year was a great example of how CRWRC has lived out this ministry. Our 64 missionaries worked in 4,566 of the world's poorest communities to help people overcome poverty. We strengthened relationships with 219 church-based or Christian organizations and helped them design programs that would reach out to people in need regardless of their religious affiliation. As a result, nearly 280,500 people improved their lives in lasting ways.

This includes people such as Mercedes Mejia, a woman who lives in one of the barrios (slums) of Monte Plata, Dominican Republic. Three years ago, Mercedes struggled to make a living for her family through a small market stall. She heard of a CRWRC program being offered through DesCo, a CRWRC partner, and decided to get involved. Through small loans and training, she now has more than \$880 of capital to invest in her business and earns about \$22 a day. Moreover, because the program was being offered by the Christians of DesCo, Mercedes became curious about Christianity. Less than a year after starting the program, Mercedes accepted the Lord. Her husband soon joined her, and they are both now members of a local church in Monte Plata. Along with the staff of DesCo, Mercedes and her husband are becoming key strongholds in their community by running their business and reaching out to others in need.

In addition to strengthening communities such as Monte Plata, CRWRC responds on your behalf to natural disasters and crisis situations. Last year, we responded to hurricanes, tornadoes, and other storms across North America by sending 989 volunteers to disaster sites. They gave 103,365 hours of their time to rebuild homes and lives. CRWRC also worked through our partnership with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to distribute 5,378 metric tons (5,928 tons) of emergency food supplies to families in countries such as Ethiopia, Mali, Uganda, Liberia, and Laos, which were suffering from disasters such as drought and war.

In all of these situations, as we have responded to God's call for our lives with acts of justice and mercy, we have also realized that God is teaching and improving us during the process. Each day, we learn new lessons from people around the world that help us grow and develop as an organization. Because the Christian Reformed Church has shown that it is also committed to acts of justice and mercy, through its participation, prayer, and financial support of CRWRC, we hope that we are able to help our churches grow and develop. Thank you for being a part of this effort.

II. Board matters

An important support to CRWRC's ministry is our board. The primary function of the board is to provide direction for CRWRC's ministry programs and to encourage the vision of the organization as a whole.

The CRWRC governance structure was revised this year. Delegates from the classes and up to twenty-seven members at large, constitute the Board of Delegates of CRWRC. The delegates are a vital communication link with classes and churches, and they also select seven-member national boards for both the United States and Canada. The two boards together form the fourteen-member Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for CRWRC as a whole.

A. *Board of Directors of CRWRC-Canada*

Mr. Jim Romahn, president

Mr. John Richey, vice president

Ms. Anna Feddes, secretary

Ms. Shirley Vandenberg, treasurer

Rev. John Koster, pastoral adviser

Mr. Bany Castellanos

Mr. Dirk Veeneman

B. *Board of Directors of CRWRC-U.S.A.*

Ms. Mary Dengerink, president

Ms. Gloria Ranney, vice president

Mr. Greg Geels, secretary

Mr. Randy Kroll, treasurer

Mr. Randy Hedman

Mr. Wes Rozema

III. CRWRC's programs and ministries

Transformation continued to fire up CRWRC's imagination this year—inside our organization, in communities around the world, and in the CRC. We are all about change, learning to live justice and love mercy, always reforming things to be more like God's intentions for his world. We want to be the best possible stewards of the resources God gives us as we help people help themselves to be all God calls them to be—only by God's grace! To him alone be the glory!

A. *Development regions*

1. Asia

In Asia, the theme of sustainability percolates strongly through CRWRC's work with families, congregations, organizations, and communities. Helping families learn to save and manage their money as well as helping organizations learn to mobilize local support contribute to sustainable change. The Asia team has pioneered new approaches to bring about lasting positive change in communities such as Laos and Cambodia. Churches in Cambodia express their appreciation for CRWRC's work with them; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) recognizes excellence in community health work in Bangladesh and funded a three-year child health program. CRWRC's peacemaking work in communities with mixed Christian and Muslim populations is on the cutting edge of this kind of work in the world. Partners WorldWide (formerly

Partners for Christian Development) works with CRWRC in Bangladesh and the Philippines. The existence of present and past partnerships over the years paid off during the tsunami disaster challenge in India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. Tom Post was appointed Asia's new team leader. Asia staff reported 103,000 participants (see Note on p. 177) last year. In addition, five thousand families served in relief programs. Sixty-five thousand participants achieved their personal goals during 2004.

2. Eastern Europe

Team leader Gabi Achim reports that this has been an especially challenging year as the team has phased out of a couple of relationships with partners who did not specialize in community development and is now working to identify new partners. Three team members left this year—a big turnover for this relatively small team. Working with both Romanian Christians and Hungarian Reformed Christians calls for constant commitment to the ministry of reconciliation within this team. Dr. Peter Borgdorff visited them this year and expressed enormous appreciation for their work. The team reported 11,305 participants (see Note on p. 177), of whom 1,759 achieved their personal goals.

3. North America

CRWRC works with churches to transform some fifty neighborhoods in the United States—helping churches work with their communities, making life better for everyone, and including everyone's gifts. Sometimes this work involves training a group of deacons. Sometimes it involves helping a church start a new Christian Community Development Organization (a Christian nonprofit organization that helps the church do its work in the local community). It *always* includes:

- Helping churches engage with their neighbors, instead of doing programs for their neighbors, by creating a community agenda for change that is shared widely in the community.
- Serving the residents and the community through a variety of programs and initiatives.
- Changing the systems of law, governance, and aid so that the poor have a pathway out of poverty.

North America ministry team staff reported 11,700 participants (see Note on p. 177) last year, of whom 5,600 achieved their personal goals.

(CRWRC's North America relief work is reported under Disaster Response Services.)

4. Latin America

For several years, the Latin America Ministry Team worked hard to develop quality programs and now more than ever is getting back to the basics of community focus. Currently, CRWRC partners with 39 agencies in 9 countries in 600 communities—helping them define and measure their own growth in different capacity areas, along with technical programs such as agriculture, health, literacy, and income generation. Transformed churches can contribute to real transformation in their communities, and, because of that, 12 of the partners are denominations and 6 more work only through church leadership. CRWRC also continues to work closely with

Christian Reformed World Missions in several of these countries. The team here is concerned that the proposed free-trade agreements in the Americas will increase the gap between rich and poor; CRWRC will study the issues raised with partners and communities. Latin America CRWRC staff reported 19,800 participants (see Note on p. 177) of which 10,000 achieved their personal goals.

5. East and Southern Africa

Civil strife, HIV / AIDS, and food security continue to be the prominent issues that CRWRC addresses with 49 church partners. We have had the privilege of serving over 150,000 participants in 8 countries this past year. Collaborative relationships such as an alliance of evangelical relief and development organizations enabled us to access significant USA government resources in order to address HIV / AIDS. Similarly, relationships with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Partners WorldWide greatly enhanced our impact with partners in community and economic development. We have been able to engage over 185 constituents in the past 3 years in service opportunities, and this has increased their moral and financial support for our ministry. Unfortunately, the funding levels for the block grant declined and resulted in a closure of all CRWRC programs in Rwanda. CRWRC staff reported 113,600 participants (see Note on p. 177); 56,000 achieved their personal goals.

6. West Africa

Justice issues were addressed in Mali, and CRWRC's peace and reconciliation work in Nigeria was a highlight. Fighting HIV / AIDS is in the forefront of our work in Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria and is an exciting learning area for CRWRC in West Africa. Strengthening the work of the church in its community, especially its diaconal ministry, is a familiar dimension of our work in Nigeria, and it is a growing edge in Niger and Sierra Leone. With the Fulfulde New Testament in the proofreading stage in Mali (with strong CRWRC staff involvement in this translation), this is another growing opportunity for a transformational CRWRC presence in Muslim communities. Mary Crickmore has been appointed as the new West Africa team leader. CRWRC reported 38,147 participants (see Note on p. 177), of whom 29,044 achieved their personal goals in 2004.

Note: CRWRC defines *participant* as "a person enrolled in one program and working toward a clearly defined goal for lasting change in her or his life." As we strongly desire "integrated program approaches," this often results in some people who are enrolled in more than one program; for example, health *and* income generation. When we say a participant achieved his or her personal goals, we mean that he or she was successful in meeting the defined change in income, health, literacy, or whatever sector that person was involved in.

B. *Justice education and advocacy*

To work toward transformation that is the permanent, positive change that CRWRC seeks, we help communities and partners design programs that look at *causes* of their situation and go beyond addressing the *symptoms* of daily injustices.

Certainly these symptoms must be relieved. The hungry need to be fed, the homeless housed, the HIV / AIDs affected orphans cared for, and disaster survivors attended to. However, to create the kind of change that brings a hope of permanent well-being requires us to look deeper at the systems, institutions, values, and beliefs that feed injustice. The communities and churches that we work with worldwide have taught us that.

As a result, we have defined several actions that communities can do to strengthen their own work of making change. These actions are:

- Organizing community groups around a shared vision for change.
- Cultivating risk-taking to use local laws and legal systems to support the changes they seek.
- Studying Scripture to reveal God’s concern for the poor and the oppressed.
- Mobilizing fellow citizens and church members to work at making change.

For example, in Ecuador, CRWRC is working with indigenous people who are often left out of the legal system. As a result, many do not know their rights and therefore do not know how to use the existing laws to protect themselves from land grabbing or other criminal abuse. The communities with whom we work receive training on the national constitution and learn how to assert their rights to the local authorities. By using the legal system, families are able to protect their ancestral lands and continue to provide food and income for themselves and their children.

Similarly, in Tanzania where widows are frequently dispossessed of their dead husbands land holdings, housing, and name, the church educates pastors on the biblical principles and legal rights of widows.

For fiscal year 2005-2006, CRWRC programming specifically in human rights, land rights, civic education, peacebuilding, and women’s empowerment continues to impact 29 partner groups and 24,836 people.

C. Disaster relief and rehabilitation

What do justice and mercy look like to a disaster survivor? Food? A roof to sleep under? Human dignity? When earthquakes, hurricanes, famines, and manmade disasters happen in our world, this is the fundamental question for the relief team of CRWRC. Then, with the support of our churches, we strive to follow Micah’s call. We deploy staff and volunteers to areas of need to discover the affected community’s vision of justice and mercy in the aftermath of the disaster and then utilize resources to carry out our work. After walking alongside a community for a time, we hope that when we part ways they will have been enabled to help themselves and each other. We carry out disaster response but also disaster preparedness and mitigation—being better prepared in the event of future disasters and reducing their ongoing negative impacts.

Most people in North America will probably think of Florida when they think of disasters in 2004. It was a difficult hurricane season this fall for that state, for Alabama, and for other surrounding states, having been pelted by four hurricanes in quick succession. Once again, the “green shirts” were there. Disaster Response Services (DRS) was able to send in rapid response teams to clean up debris and to clear away some of the many fallen trees. Needs assess-

ment surveys were also carried out, and we expect that DRS will be involved in rebuilding people's homes and lives in that region for years to come.

The spring and summer of 2004 brought with it some severe storms, including tornadoes, and DRS was able to respond in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Ohio. We also continued rebuilding projects in areas that had been hit with disaster in 2002 and 2003—from Texas, to North Carolina, to Tennessee, to Washington and British Columbia.

A total of 989 volunteers worked 103,365 hours—which is the equivalent of 51 full-time employees. Many of these hours were spent completing a staggering 15,240 door-to-door needs assessment surveys! We are ever thankful to our volunteers who don their green shirts time and again to bring hope to those who need it. They are bearers of mercy.

The international side of relief activities is also often characterized by natural disasters. Sadly though, many of the most terrible crises facing the world are caused by conflict. One of the most glaring examples in the world today is the unrest in Sudan. Black Sudanese are being tortured, killed, or chased from their homes by government-sponsored janjaweed militia in the Darfur region. Close to one million people are displaced, many finding shelter in refugee camps that fail to meet basic human needs. CRWRC, with the cooperation of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and other partners, is carrying out a multifaceted program aimed at meeting a variety of needs for thirty-five thousand displaced Sudanese: food, shelter, water, and sanitary latrines. We pray that justice will soon come to this nation.

Another area that has been living through civil unrest for years is northern Uganda. CRWRC has provided mosquito nets and latrines to promote the health of children as well as providing food and seed for displaced families living in refugee camps. At the request of the displaced people, CRWRC was also able to deliver two thousand Bibles to those who had their homes and all their personal belongings destroyed as they fled for their lives. This program focused on twenty-five hundred families.

By God's grace, CRWRC was also able to come to the assistance of Haitians this year. Through three separate interventions in 2004—response to unrest following President Aristide's ouster in February, to major flooding in south-east Haiti in May, and to severe flooding in northern Haiti last fall—CRWRC was able to stand with disaster survivors. Emergency food and other materials have been provided. In northern Haiti, CRWRC is also involved in constructing new homes and helping in agricultural and infrastructure recovery. We have been able to extend the hand of mercy to our sisters and brothers created in God's image.

The year 2004 was characterized by many other disasters. Those to which CRWRC responded include fall flooding in Bangladesh and northeastern India, Liberians displaced within their own country following years of civil war, and severe typhoons in the Philippines at the end of the year. As this report was being written, we felt the sorrow of the victims of the earthquake and tsunami that devastated South Asia. CRWRC, through its staff and partners, was ready to help. A major response will be required in this area, likely spanning several years. Financially, this disaster has generated the largest donor response in CRWRC's history; \$8 to \$9 million U.S. dollars is expected.

We are grateful for the overwhelming support of our constituency and for the tremendous confidence shown in CRWRC's ability to respond effectively. The Canadian government, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), also expressed its confidence by approving CRWRC as eligible to receive a 1:1 match on the over \$3.25 million dollars raised in Canada.

In addition to disaster response, rehabilitation programs focusing on long-term food security have also been growing through CRWRC's memberships in the Foods Resource Bank and CFGB. This year, CFGB Food Security programming included work in Laos, Mali, and the Dominican Republic. CRWRC-led programming with the CFGB in 2003-2004 (both disaster response and rehabilitation) totaled Can\$3.4 million.

CRWRC is an implementing member of the Foods Resource Bank (FRB). The FRB works on behalf of its members to mobilize and increase the resources needed for food-security projects in the developing world. FRB's goal is to engage the grassroots agricultural community in the United States (similar to CFGB in Canada), along with individuals, churches, and urban communities, to grow solutions to hunger problems in our world. As a partner to CRWRC, FRB seeks to participate in helping to alleviate hunger throughout our world by working to establish food security through sustainable development activities. Taken from the FRB mission statement, "food security is achieved when all persons at all times have the physical and economic access to enough food to provide the nutrients they need for productive, active and healthy lives."

In 2004, CRWRC programming valued at over \$350,000 was achieved through the FRB partnership with an investment of only \$30,000 of CRWRC funds. The balance came from "growing projects," other partner organizations, and matching dollars from USAID. Communities in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Nicaragua benefited from this programming.

CRWRC was also supported generously by sister organizations that share our goals and objectives. Among these are the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, the Presbyterian Church of the USA, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Foods Resource Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency, the United States Agency for International Development, and fellow members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

We thank our God for the privilege and responsibility we have to accept his call to walk with our sisters and brothers around the world who are first and foremost image bearers of God and then survivors of disaster. To act with justice and to love mercy in this daily walk is our call to stand with our hurting family across the globe.

"I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was alone and away from home, and you invited me into your house. I was without clothes, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me" (Matt. 25:35-36).

D. Community services

1. ServiceLink United States

ServiceLink-US has completed its fourth program year. The new buzzword around CRWRC is constituency transformation. This new thrust will involve building a strategy that can help to build relationships and provide transformational education for both our constituency and our communities. This strategy will allow churches and individuals to be

involved in our work at many different levels, while equipping them with the tools they need to accomplish their mission and /or vision in their local communities. It will be exciting to see what new knowledge will result for CRWRC as they embark on the journey to structure service learning in a way that gives maximum benefit to all involved.

a. Discovery Tours

There were two successful Discovery Tours this year. More than fourteen CRWRC supporters from the United States and Canada had exciting adventures in Nigeria and Bangladesh-India. Participants of these tours learned firsthand about principles of *Walking with the Poor*. When participants returned from a tour, many did presentations in their churches and continue to support CRWRC in various ways.

In 2005, CRWRC will host the following tours: Nigerian Odyssey (February), Tanzanian Safari Discovery Tour (March), Romania Spring Adventure (May), and Malawi (August).

b. Program HOPE!

In September 2004, three young adults were selected for new thirty-month internship opportunities. This program continues to build on the lessons we learned from our former Service and Training (S&T) program, and strongly emphasizes the learning tenets of community development. Interns are currently placed in Muskegon, Michigan; Lilongwe, Malawi; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Dakar, Senegal; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Ferndale, Washington; and Soroti, Uganda. There will be one additional placement in September 2005 in Guatemala.

c. Youth programs

The Encounters program with Youth Unlimited is CRWRC's vehicle to involve young adults ages 16-24. Young adults learn the basics of community development (community mapping, advocacy, health, and so forth). The CRWRC site this year was Chicago. Students spent several weeks with CRWRC staff Ruth Hoekwater and Kara Breems learning how to do community development with a diverse community of more than eighty languages.

CRWRC's formal partnership with Calvin College to place Third World Studies students in international settings to learn community development has been going well. In addition to this program, CRWRC works with five different colleges to place students in internships within our home offices. Some of those internships are within the program areas of marketing, research, communications, world hunger, and best practices.

d. Volunteer placements

Volunteer placements and hours served continue to grow steadily for CRWRC. Since the beginning of the ServiceLink-US program in 2000-2001, the number of volunteers has tripled—from two hundred to six hundred (this year's projected number). The number of hours served has more than doubled—from ten thousand to twenty-two thousand. We anticipate growth of at least 10 percent in new placements annually for the next five years as groups and individuals become involved at various levels.

2. ServiceLink Canada

CRWRC Canada is in its tenth year of being involved with ServiceLink and celebrates with them their tenth anniversary in 2005 of serving our Canadian constituents. This year, 335 people served in many different capacities, of which 141 people contributed 15,500 hours to the work of CRWRC. Some of the opportunities that were available included work teams to Romania, Honduras, and the United States, as well as various individuals to the Philippines, Romania, Zambia, Kenya, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Honduras. A number of local volunteers also assist CRWRC in their daily activities at the Burlington office. For those going overseas, individuals spent time with CRWRC partners in farming, accounting, community development, relief work (food distribution), gardening, health care, child care, and some light construction.

A unique service and learning opportunity took place through the ServiceLink program this past year. The project was called “A Week With Micah 6:8” and was a collaborative effort with the Canadian Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, Diaconal Ministries Canada (Operation Manna) and All Nations CRC in Halifax. The event was designed especially for young adults, allowing them to more fully understand issues in the area of social justice.

Although ServiceLink has had to say farewell to a few Regional Coordinators of Volunteers (RCVs), it was also able to welcome new people to fill these positions. Currently two classes are vacant—Classis Chatham and Classis Quinte.

We give thanks to God for his continued faithfulness in the ServiceLink program—for providing numerous volunteers who are passionate about serving God by serving others.

E. *Classis Renewal Ministry Team*

CRWRC is a founding partner agency of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team, which has supported classis vision leaders with needed resources since 1992. The team builds on current experiences and practices in our renewing classes by partnering with them to share success stories and key learnings about ministry at the classis level. Prayer support as well as other means of mutual encouragement—including a quarterly newsletter and website—are key emphases of this work. This past year, the team continued to partner with twelve classes in a mutual learning covenant, hosted an annual conference for eighty classis leaders in Des Plaines, Illinois, increased classis participation in the classical prayer coordinator network, and hosted two peer groups for classis staff and ministry team chairs. Further work is being planned in the areas of program self-assessment, promoting classical diaconal ministry, gathering new sources for classical funding of ministries, and sponsoring leadership classes as mentors to classes who need to be encouraged to engage in renewal work. Rev. Thea Leunk serves the team as a three-quarter time classis coach.

IV. Finance

A. Financial history

This table displays CRWRC revenues and expenses from 1997-2005 (projected).

CRWRC - CONSOLIDATED
REVENUE AND EXPENSE HISTORY/BUDGETS
(Including Disasters)

(B = Budget)

	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05B
Revenue	11,113	13,613	13,344	13,661	12,471	13,759	14,114	12,191
Overseas	5,000	5,551	6,320	6,672	6,925	8,401	8,425	7,749
North America	872	1,143	1,313	1,511	1,446	929	872	978
Dis. Resp. Serv.	1,822	2,371	3,214	3,528	2,234	3,220	2,403	837
Resource Devel.	1,053	1,144	1,363	1,448	1,141	1,198	1,354	1,466
Administration	1,183	1,152	1,231	1,092	1,033	1,165	1,152	1,039
Total Expenses	9,930	11,361	13,441	14,251	12,779	14,913	14,206	12,069
Net rev./(exp.)	1,183	2,252	(97)	(590)	(308)	(1,154)	(92)	122

B. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod's mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job Level	Number of Positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd
16	1	1st

C. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2005—Financial and Business Supplement*.

V. Resource development

CRWRC's transformational ministry is made possible through the generous donations of churches and individuals. We are grateful to God for the way people—and the resources needed to support them—were made available in 2003-2004 to carry out ministry around the world.

The largest percentage of CRWRC support (78%) comes from individuals and churches. Most of these supporters are affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church; however, individuals, schools, and congregations from outside of the CRC are becoming a larger part of our support base.

Other cooperating agencies continue to be important in the financial support of CRWRC. More than US\$2.4 million was donated by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Partners WorldWide, and other funding agencies.

Government grants to CRWRC totaled more than US\$1.5 million with most of this income coming from the Canada International Development Agency (CIDA). CIDA has been a very significant and consistent source of program funding for over two decades.

Estate bequests and planned gifts are an increasingly important part of the resource base for CRWRC ministry. These gifts are placed in the Joseph Fund and are made available for programs over a seven-year period. More than US\$2,114,877 was contributed to the 2003-2004 budget from this source.

In addition to raising financial resources, CRWRC strives to educate and involve our North American constituency to help bring them together with people in poverty. Last year, CRWRC did this by having staff and representatives from CRWRC's partner organizations visit North American churches and individuals to share about their work. We also provided opportunities for North Americans to visit overseas programs, attend meetings, and /or participate in work teams. These interchanges encourage better understanding, more informed prayer, and a greater commitment to the work of the church.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to any of the following: Ms. Mary Dengerink, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Jim Romahn, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Mr. Wayne deJong, director of CRWRC-Canada when CRWRC matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

Note: Budgets and financial reports are approved by the BOT and presented to synod's Finance advisory committee as information. Requests for offerings and other forms of financial support are also processed through the Finance advisory committee.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andrew Ryskamp, CRWRC-U.S.A. director
Wayne deJong, CRWRC-Canada director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund operates exclusively in the United States; Canada having its own, similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold—primarily to members, classes, and churches of the CRCNA.

II. Board of Directors

The terms of Mr. James Fredricks and Mr. W. Brian Seo expire on June 30, 2005. Mr. Fredricks has served two terms, and Mr. Seo has served one three-year term and is unable to serve a second term. The board requests synod to appoint two board members, one from the following nominees. The second slate of names will be presented in the supplementary materials.

A. Position 1—select one for a three-year term through June 2008

Mr. Ronald L. Haan is a member of Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as an elder and a deacon. He currently serves on the boards of trustees of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services and the Barnabas Foundation. He has previously served as a trustee of Christian Schools International and the Grand Rapids Christian Schools. Mr. Haan is a graduate of Calvin College and is currently executive vice president at Fifth Third Bank, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Mr. David L. Klooster is a member of Burton Heights CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he is an elder and clerk of council. He currently serves on the Classis Grand Rapids South new church development committee, on the board of directors of Campus Directions, and on the steering committee of City Hope Ministries, a new church plant. Mr. Klooster is a graduate of Calvin College, has worked in banking as a commercial lender, and currently is the owner of Small Business Association Professionals.

B. Position 2

A slate of nominees for this position will be presented in a supplementary report to synod.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Mr. Ronald Baylor (2006), Mr. Arie Leegwater (2006), Ms. Diane Apol (2007), and Rev. Julius Medenblik (2007).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in thirty states and in the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, and Washington. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 2004), a total of \$15,846,572 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to five years, and interest rates vary from 1.00 percent to 7.06 percent, with a time-weighted average of 3.45 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect the original term and market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. To date, over three hundred requests for loan information have been received from various Christian Reformed churches in the United States; more than 130 loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 2004, a total of \$11,728,654 was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. The Loan Fund maintains a loan loss reserve that should be adequate to cover any potential losses.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data:

	2002	2003	2004
Cash and equivalents	\$5,231,822	\$7,673,514	\$8,301,638
Loans and accounts receivable	\$12,453,501	\$11,639,768	\$11,772,678
Equipment and software, less depreciation	\$12,810	\$6,405	
Total assets	\$17,698,133	\$19,319,687	\$20,074,316
Notes and accounts payable	\$13,711,307	\$15,188,798	\$15,846,572
Net assets	\$3,986,826	\$4,130,889	\$4,227,744
Total liabilities and net assets	\$17,698,133	\$19,319,687	\$20,074,316

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 2004, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2005—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

A. The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained.

B. Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.

C. An unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowings of up to \$1,000,000. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Mrs. Alice Damsteegt (60 percent of full-time), and Mr. Carl Gronsman, who also provides support to CRC Home Missions as a member of the CRCNA Financial Services staff.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund's executive director, or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod elect two board members from the nominees provided to serve on the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Carl A. Gronsman, executive director

Pensions

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement benefits for employees of denominational agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

Administration of these programs is handled jointly by the denomination's Pension Office and Office of Personnel. The responsibilities of the Office of Personnel include communication and enrollment; the Pension Office handles financial administration, accounting, control, and investment management.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet two to four times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed to address matters unique to the responsibilities of the U.S. or Canadian trustees.

The U.S. ministers' pension plan is a "qualified" plan in the eyes of the Internal Revenue Service, which means that the plan complies with the requirements of the applicable sections of the Internal Revenue Code. It is not subject to the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) nor is it required (or allowed) to purchase insurance from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). This means that payment of benefits must be made from the income and assets of the plan, inasmuch as there is no governmental guarantee that benefit payments will be made.

The Canadian ministers' pension plan is a "registered" plan under the Ontario Pension Benefits Act (PBA) and the Income Tax Act. It is registered with Ontario because the largest number of members resides in that province. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) regulates the funding of the plan under the Ontario PBA. FSCO considers the plan to be a Multi-Employer Pension Plan (MEPP) and, as such, its pension benefits are not guaranteed by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. Accordingly, in the language of these regulations, "if, on wind-up of the plan, the assets of the plan are insufficient to meet the liabilities of the pension plan, pension benefits may be reduced." This means that, as is the case with the U.S. plan, payment of benefits must be made from the income and assets of the plan; there is no governmental guarantee that benefit payments will be made.

The U.S. Board of Pensions has five members and is chaired by Mr. Lloyd Bierma. Similarly, the Canadian Pension Trustees are five in number and are chaired by Rev. Jake Kuipers. The Canadian pension trustees have reviewed FSCO's requirements regarding the duties and composition of pension boards. In this regard, the Canadian trustees are considered to be representatives of the members by virtue of the appointment process, the language of the plan's trust instrument, and the plan itself.

The responsibilities of both boards include long-term planning, benefit-related decision-making, and policy definition, as well as oversight of fund assets and investment returns. The boards monitor the investment activities of

the funds by means of regular reports from their money-management firms and by ongoing analysis of portfolio returns by professional measurement and performance consultants.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' pension plans

The ministers' pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined (by formula), and the funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations of amounts needed. Defined-benefit plans place market and mortality risk with the plan and the sponsoring organization. Accordingly, when markets fall and if members live longer than expected, the plan and the sponsor pick up the cost. While the primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits, the plans also provide benefits to the spouses of participants who die while in active ministry, as well as to the orphans of deceased members. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance company to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing that is required by the carrier.

As described later in this report, recent synods have approved several changes to the plans since they were established in 1983. Taken together, they have benefited plan participants, the denomination, and the plan itself, and they should serve to improve the plans' financial viability and staying power. While changes have been significant, the pension trustees have not made any recommendations that involve the basic form of the plans. However, they are aware that trends in North America appear to favor defined contribution plans and that many new retirement plans have taken that form. They also believe that in recent years many defined benefit plans have been changed to the defined contribution form.

The pension trustees are acutely aware that any decision to change the basic design of a retirement plan requires a significant amount of research and planning and that implementation of such a change is a complex undertaking. In January 2005, the pension trustees approved a strategic plan to consider changing the basic form of the plans. That document appears in the Appendix to this report. The letter that serves as its introduction makes clear that the strategic plan is not built on a presumption that change is due but on the notion that change should be given serious consideration. It is hoped that the invitation to share your comments and suggestions with the pension trustees not only will provide them with useful insights but also will serve to broaden the discussion.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2004, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	U.S.	Canada	Total
Active ministers	863	226	1,089
Retired ministers	394	116	510
Spouses and dependents	126	19	145
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	82	16	98
Total	1,465	377	1,842

Ordinarily, every three years independent actuaries are employed to do a valuation of the plans. The most recent actuarial valuation of the U.S. Plan was performed as of June 30, 2003, and furnished the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts for 2004, 2005, and 2006. Because the Canadian Plan was less than 80 percent funded at December 31, 2003, it will be required to submit an annual valuation to the provincial regulators. Accordingly, information regarding church and participant assessment amounts for 2006 is not available for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that it will be released to the churches and others following Synod 2005.

1. Basic assumptions and priorities

- a. The denomination and the plans are binational. In 1982, synod indicated that the church's total pension obligation to ministers and their dependents is an across-the-board denominational responsibility requiring joint financing (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 50).
- b. The plans are to be administered on an actuarially sound basis. Synods of 1969 and 1979 affirmed the concept of advance funding. "An actuarially sound plan is based on the principle that the cost of funding a pension for a person is incurred while one is actively employed. Therefore, an amount is set aside each year during one's career so that at retirement there will be sufficient monies to pay the pension benefits in accordance with the terms of the plan" (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 451).
- c. Synods, in their approval of the basic design of the plans, have endorsed the notion that all pastors who retire in a given year and have the same years of active participation in the plans should receive the same benefit regardless of differences in preretirement salaries.
- d. The value of housing, whether paid in cash or as a church-furnished home, is reflected in the design of the plans' benefit formula. This is accomplished by including housing in an income-replacement target that is comprised of the amounts paid by the denomination's plans and by governmental plans—the Social Security Administration in the United States and the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security in Canada. Retirement income from the plans and from governmental plans was targeted at 60 percent in 1992 and was increased to 70 percent in 1999. The plans' benefit formulation, currently 1.1 percent of the final average salary multiplied by the retiree's years of credited service for service through December 31, 1984, and 1.46 percent for service thereafter, reflects these targets.
- e. The determination of the funded position of the plans, including the actuarial accrued liability, is based on several significant assumptions. These assumptions are reviewed and approved regularly by the U.S. and Canadian trustees and are based on historical data and expectations for future trends. Because pensions are based on the final average salary in the year of retirement, expectations concerning increases in salaries enter very significantly into the determination of the funded position of the plans.
- f. The trustees have placed high value on the availability of information concerning the plans and the interest of each participant. The plans' communication activities include the following:

- Distribution of annual statements of estimated pension benefits to all active participants. Annual statements included an estimate of pension benefits based on actual years of credited service through the date of the statement and projected benefit amounts based on an assumption of continued service to age 65.
- Participants are furnished a plan brochure containing information regarding retirement and other benefits provided by the plans, examples of benefit calculations, and other information of interest to participants.
- Summarized financial information for the plans is included in the annual *Agenda for Synod* and the *Acts of Synod*.
- Classical treasurers are furnished with copies of the complete audited or reviewed financial statements of the denominations' agencies and institutions, including those of the benefit plans. These are available for examination by interested parties.
- Representatives of the plans are invited to make presentations to groups of members and classes. If possible, all such invitations are responded to affirmatively.
- Finally, plan members and others have been invited by a variety of means to direct questions to the pension office. That office is able to furnish an informed response to nearly any question concerning the plans.

2. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in balanced portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines approved by synod in 1998, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and is regularly reviewed by the trustees. Their primary goal, set for them by the pension trustees, is to provide an above-average return and at the same time preserve principal.

In down markets, above-average returns are little comfort as portfolio balances decline and short-term funding becomes a challenge. However, on balance, it must be remembered that the plans are very long-term investors, and the pension trustees have not attempted to "time the markets" with large moves in and out of equity positions spurred by timed changes in portfolio asset allocation. Such an approach to investing, although appealing at times, has been demonstrated to be distinctly unrewarding. It must be remembered that, in significant part, the plans' long-term financial performance has made it possible to provide the level of current and future benefits.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of June 30, 2003, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$100,000,000 for the U.S. plan and \$31,400,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the cost of the changes approved by synod in 2003 and represent the obligations that the plans have to over 1,800 active; disabled; and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2004	December 31, 2003
United States (U.S. \$)	\$94,373,000	\$89,047,000
Canada (Can. \$)	\$24,835,000	\$23,392,00

Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	2004	2003	2002	2001	5yrs	10yrs
Canada	11.2%	12.7%	-4.4%	-4.5%	2.4%	8.7%
U.S.	10.4%	20.0%	-10.5%	-1.6%	3.3%	10.0%

Dividends, interest, and long-term appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings are used to provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to their active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries. As portfolio performance statistics indicate, the plans have participated in the upside of financial markets and have suffered from the market declines witnessed in the last several years. On balance, the pension trustees are grateful for long-term portfolio performance and are mindful of both the long-term nature of the plans' obligations and the corresponding long-term nature of its investment policies and objectives as well as its funding needs.

3. Changes to the plan

The Plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. The basic form of the Plan was not altered; it retained its largely traditional defined benefit form. However, while the basic form was retained, changes were made to improve benefits provided by the Plan, to clarify how the Plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans (or that affect them) made by recent synods include the following:

- 1997 Changed funding for first or only pastors and chaplains from ministry shares to per member billings.
- 1999 Increased the "multiple" used to determine benefit amounts from 1.10 percent to 1.46 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2000.
 Survivor benefit amount changed from 80 percent to $66\frac{2}{3}$ percent for benefit amounts determined using the 1.46 percent multiple.
 Early retirement reduction factor changed to .3 percent from .6 percent per month.
 Increased retiree's benefits by 2 percent per year for each year of retirement during the period July 1, 1992, through December 31, 1998.
 Required that adjustments to benefit amounts be considered at least every three years.
 Performed a general rewriting of the plans to ensure that, among other things, the two plans conform to each other as much as possible.
- 2001 Approved a variety of optional benefit forms in addition to the Plan's normal form.
 Applied the plan's 1.46 percent multiple to all service beginning January 1, 1985.

- 2003 Approved guidelines for part-time service.
- Required payment for upgrading the interests of previously frozen participants reinstated as active members of the plans.
- Acted to replace self-insured disability benefits with an insurance contract.
- Changed funding protocols for all organized churches, effective January 1, 2004, to require payment of the greater of direct costs or per member assessments.
- Linked timely payment of annual costs (the greater of participant or per member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors of organized churches.
- 2004 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the Plan, effective January 1, 2006.
- Approved a rule requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised regarding the proposed action by the pension trustees.
- Amended Church Order Article 15 to include specific elements of “proper support,” including payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan.

Taken together, these changes have significantly improved the design and administration of the plan, and they benefit plan participants, the denomination as sponsor, and the plan itself. They should serve to improve the financial viability and staying power of the plans.

4. Funding

Through December 31, 1997, the plans were funded by a combination of ministry shares and direct billings. Beginning in 1998, the plans no longer participated in the ministry share system and, rather, were supported by means of member assessments. Under this system, pension costs associated with all first or only pastors of organized churches and all endorsed chaplains were funded by an assessment based on professing members age 18 or older.

Synod 2003 modified the plan’s financing arrangements. Beginning in 2004, all organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined at an amount per professing member age 18 and older, or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor’s participation in the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2005 is \$27.00 per member in Canada and \$23.40 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$6,764 and \$5,288, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

In 2005, with the sole exception of organizations that employ endorsed chaplains, all emerging churches and each other ministry that employs a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity is required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed quarterly, and the grant of credited service for pastors in the employ of agencies, churches, and other

organizations is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed. Beginning January 1, 2006, these requirements will apply equally to endorsed chaplains, with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits.

As discussed previously in this report, costs for 2006 will be determined based on actuarial information that is not available to the pension trustees in time for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that these amounts will be included in the annual mailing of information regarding denominational ministry shares, offerings, and other financial data expected to be made available to the churches and others in July 2005.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees (those not ordained as ministers of the Word) of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plan on a quarterly basis by participating employers in an amount equal to 9 percent of the compensation of the unordained employees who are participants in the plan. Participants receive quarterly statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among eight investment alternatives in the United States and seven in Canada, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Bank One, N.A. Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Sun Life Financial Group.

At December 31, 2004, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$17,415,000 in the United States and \$2,207,000 in Canada, and, as of that date, there were 401 participants in the U.S. plan and 95 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	U.S.	Canada
Active	272	51
Inactive	129	44

C. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions, are sent each year to the clerk of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the U.S. Board of Pensions and to Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus when matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2006 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2005, from the following nominee(s):

1. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

- a. *Rev. Robert Heerspink* has been a CRC minister for twenty-three years. He has served five congregations and is presently pastor of Faith Community CRC, Wyoming, Michigan. His service to the denomination includes the Chaplains Committee, the Pastoral Ministries Board, and The Back to God Hour board, and he has been a delegate to three synods.

He has also been active as stated clerk and committee member of several classes. Other activities include membership on the Barnabas Firstfruits Committee, author of *Becoming a Firstfruits Congregation*, and contributor to *The Joy of Generosity*.

- b. *Rev. William G. Vis* has served the denomination as an ordained minister for twenty-five years. He has pastored five congregations and presently is pastor of Pine Grove CRC, Howard City, Michigan. His service to the denomination includes membership on the boards of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and World Missions where he has served several terms as board chair. He has been a delegate to synod five times and has each time been a member of the synodical advisory committee on finance, including service as a reporter for that committee. Rev. Vis has been active on the classical level as well with service as stated clerk and as a member of the classical interim committee. He has had a career-long interest and involvement with clergy taxation and financial planning, as well as with denominational financial matters.

2. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

- a. *Mr. James Clousing* has forty years' experience in employee benefit plan design, implementation, and administration. Up to his recent retirement, he served the Sara Lee Corporation as its executive director of world-wide employee benefit programs with particular emphasis on the corporation's benefit programs in North America, Mexico, and the Caribbean covering some 70,000 employees. The benefit programs for which he was responsible included more than 50 pension plans, 100 health plans, 100 death benefit plans, and 110 long-term and short-term disability plans.

Mr. Clousing is a graduate of Calvin College, and is a member of Bethel CRC of Lansing, Illinois, where he served seven terms as a member of council. He has served several terms as a member of the board of directors of Illiana Christian High School and two terms as a member of the Roseland Christian Ministries board of directors, including one term as president of the board. Currently, Mr. Clousing serves as an alternate member of the denomination's Board of Trustees.

- b. *Mr. Russell Hollender* has worked in commercial banking for thirty-four years in various consumer and commercial lending capacities. In all those positions, he was also responsible for lending supervision and operations management, and, for many of those years, he specialized in church lending. He has also worked for RACOM Associates for a period of time as a development director for the Back to God Hour.

Mr. Hollender is a graduate of Trinity Christian College, and is a member of Hope Christian Reformed Church in Oak Forest, Illinois, where he has served several terms as a member of its council, including service as vice president and secretary. He has completed two terms on the Southwest Chicago Christian School Association Board, during which time served as board president, vice president, and treasurer. He also served a term on the Roseland Christian School Board, including a portion of that time as its president. He has completed a term on the Southwest Chicago Christian School Foundation Board, and will soon be serving on the Foundation Board of Roseland Christian School. Mr. Hollender served as a delegate to Synod 1994.

D. That synod elect two members to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2005.

1. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

- a. *Ms. Claire Veenstra*, Toronto, Ontario, is a member of First CRC of Toronto, where she is completing the most recent of several terms as a member of council. She currently is serving as treasurer and as an elder member of its executive committee, and she has been involved with First CRC's budgets and financial matters. In addition to service to her local church, she has served as a member of the board of trustees and the finance committee of the Institute for Christian Studies, and as a board member for Operation Manna.

She has been awarded academic degrees in science and education and has been an associate of the Society of Actuaries since 1988. She has worked in the actuarial profession for twenty-two years with William M. Mercer (now Mercer Consulting) and, more recently, with Towers Perrin. In these capacities, she has worked with companies and organizations having defined benefit pension plans for their employees and is well acquainted with financial, actuarial, and regulatory issues facing such plans. Currently, she serves as business/office coordinator for Citizens for Public Justice, Toronto.

- b. A nominee may be included in the Board of Trustees supplemental report to synod.

2. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

- a. *Mr. Joseph Koole*, Toronto, Ontario, is a member of Rehoboth Fellowship CRC in Toronto where he has served numerous terms as a member of council. In this connection, he has served as chair of council, secretary, and treasurer. On the classes level, he has served as chair of his classis nominating committee. He has had a long career in banking, and he retired in the year 2000 after forty-two years of service with Scotiabank, an international Canadian banking institution.

Mr. Koole has served as a board member and treasurer of Christian Secondary School, and as a board member and the board treasurer of the Institute for Christian Studies. In addition, he has served as a board member and board treasurer of Holland Christian Homes. Currently, he is a board member of the CRC Extension Fund and has served that organization as a board member for many years. He has served the denomination as a delegate to synod and as a volunteer on CRWRC work/mission trips to Romania in 2003 and Uganda in 2004.

- b. *Mr. Harry Schep*, Ottawa, Ontario, a Certified Management Accountant, has lifelong experience as a financial executive. Up to his retirement, he served the Federal government in the administration of financial contractual matters and negotiation for the government's informatics procurement sector. In this connection, he was directly involved in the development and presentation of financial contractual workshops for governmental procurement officers across Canada. Prior to his governmental service, he was employed in the private sector as the chief financial officer of a manufacturing company.

He is a member of the Calvin CRC where he has served a number of terms as a member of its council, including vice chair of its administrative board. Currently, he is a member of Calvin CRC's worship and finance committees and senior visitors group, and he serves as a board member and treasurer of the CRC's Ministry to Seafarers in Montreal. Mr. Schep has served several terms as a trustee for the denomination's Ministers' Pension Plan, including service as its chair. He is well versed in matters involving the regulation and administration of pension plans and, in recent years, he has provided investment, financial planning, and pension advisory services to members of the Canadian Ministers' Pension Plan.

Pensions and Insurance

Kenneth J. Horjus, director of pension administration

Consolidated Group Insurance

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies. Currently, there are 1,333 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 625 pastors and employees of local churches, 354 employees of denominational agencies, and 354 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider. The plan in Canada is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the United States, a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan.

The plan continues to be affected by the significantly increasing costs of health care. Changes were made during 2001 in the United States in the provider network and in the administration of claims. In addition, certain changes were made in 2002 to the plan's eligibility provisions to protect the plan against the possibility of adverse selection. Both of these changes have

helped limit the impact of these increased costs. Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

For 2005, premiums in the United States for the nonretiree group were increased a modest (relative to industry averages) 7.5 percent. Premiums for participants in the U.S. plan who are retired and eligible for Medicare increased by a greater amount. This is in keeping with a policy of gradually bringing retiree premiums in line with the direct cost of claims for this segment of the plan's participant population.

Consolidated Group Insurance
John H. Bolt, director of finance and administration

Appendix
Strategic Plan re Retirement Plans for Ministers

January 28, 2005

Members of the Ministers' Pension Plans, and
Others Interested in their Design and Administration

The Strategic Plan that follows this introduction was approved by the pension trustees on January 14, 2005. It mandates serious consideration of changing the basic form of the Ministers' Pension Plan. It does not mandate change - rather, it provides a description of why such consideration is needed, when it should occur, how that task may be accomplished, and some of the important values to be honored by the process.

You'll note that the Strategic Plan is addressed to the pension trustees - its title page indicates that it was prepared for their consideration. It's reproduced based on a belief that interested participants in the Ministers' Pension Plans and others will benefit from reading and reviewing it in the same form as when it was read, reviewed, and approved by the pension trustees themselves in January 2005.

The pension trustees hope that distribution of this Strategic Plan will serve to broaden the understanding of issues facing the Ministers' Pension Plans and to widen the discussion of how they may be addressed. Accordingly, they invite your comments and suggestions and ask that you send them to the pension office in Grand Rapids. All correspondence should be sent to the pension trustees at 2850 Kalamazoo SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

For your information, persons currently serving as pension trustees include the following:

The U.S. Plan

Lloyd Bierma, chair
Edward Tamminga
William Terpstra
Ray Vander Weele
George Vande Werken

The Canadian Plan

Jake Kuipers, chair
Ary de Jong
Bruce Dykstra
John Luimes
Dan VanLeeuwen

RETIREMENT PLANS FOR MINISTERS
OF THE
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT
AND
PLANNING THE FUTURE

A STRATEGIC PLAN
PREPARED FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE
JOINT PENSION TRUSTEES

JANUARY 14, 2005

PART ONE

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A

STRATEGIC PLAN

IDENTIFIED AND DESCRIBED

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

A carefully reading of the material beginning on page 11 of this strategic planning document will help develop an appreciation of some of the significant complexities involved in the design and administration of the Ministers' Pension Plans (the Plans), as well as the magnitude of the issues they face. It will provide much of the background of what compelled the pension trustees to conclude that a serious review of the basic form of the Plan is due. Such a reading will also make it very obvious that the Plans are no longer the relatively simple arrangements introduced decades ago when they depended as much for their administration on shared understandings as on written provisions. And it's increasingly evident that while reasons for change are compelling, the roadblocks in the way of change are significant.

At their September 2004 meetings, the pension trustees reviewed the entire matter, including issues discussed in this memorandum, issues involving regulatory compliance, and issues and experience of other denominations and their sponsored plans. The pension trustees also reviewed their own history as it involves consideration of what plan form is appropriate for the denomination's ministers and for the denomination itself.

Following these deliberations, the Design/Planning Committee and, subsequently, the joint pension trustees took the following action:

Request that staff prepare a strategic planning memorandum for consideration by the Design/Planning Committee and, once approved by the Committee, by the joint pension trustees at their January 2005 meetings, and that the memorandum reflect the following elements or priorities:

- * *For the time being, not introduce additional, significant proposals for changes to the plans. In other words, retain the current defined benefit form, at least for the near term until conditions are right for serious consideration of changing to a defined contribution form.*
- * *Allow the reforms/changes approved by synods in the last several years to become imbedded in the routines used to administer the plans and in the collective mind of the denomination and plan participants.*
- * *Allow time for the development of the benefits that are anticipated to result from the recent reforms/changes to the design of the plans, and allow for application of the energies and attention of staff and trustees to achieve needed improvements to the financial viability of the plans.*

- * *Identify a description of “financial viability” and a process that, once financial viability is achieved, would mandate and achieve serious consideration of migrating to a defined contribution form.*

Regarding process, the pension trustees requested that drafts of the requested memorandum be distributed to members of the Design/Planning Committee for review, input, and consultation. Following a process of (repeated) distribution of a draft document to members of the Committee for their review, input, and consultation, it is intended that the Committee will have a document for consideration by the joint pension trustees at meetings to be held in January 2005.

By this action, the pension trustees hope to develop a document that would serve to inform the discussion in terms of history and current context and to set a direction for the future. Moreover, it was hoped that the document would serve as a communication piece and would provide benchmarks that, when reached, would touch the trigger that would compel a described course of action.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION
OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

In January 2005, the pension trustees will again take up consideration of the elements of a strategic plan previously identified in summary form at its September 2004 meeting. At the January meeting, the pension trustees will be asked to approve a discussion of each element of the strategic plan, as follows:

1. *For the time being, not introduce additional, significant proposals for changes to the plans. In other words, retain the current defined benefit form, at least for the near term until conditions are right for serious consideration of changing to a defined contribution form.*

Far from indicating a continuation of the status quo, this element of the strategic plan is one that contemplates significant change. “For the time being” and “for the near term” indicate a short-term commitment to the present form while, at the same time, anticipating significant changes to come when conditions are right. Anticipated change is not described other than in broad strokes, but what is described – changing to a defined contribution form – is a very significant change in direction.

While consideration of significant change is mandated, this element of the plan provides an appropriate amount of breathing space. Persons experienced in organizational change agree that an excess of change runs the risk of becoming destructive. In this sense, organizations are likened to living things such as a garden that require a special amount of deliberate care and nurture when change occurs. They are unlike mechanical constructs (structures made of tinker toys are frequently used to illustrate the principle) that may be taken apart and reassembled in other configurations by acts of will.

In summary, this element of the strategic plan responds to the need for a sort of organizational “catching of the breath,” a chance to pause, rest, and gain some perspective from a vantage point itself attained by recent, significant change in the design, funding, and administration of the plans.

2. *Allow the reforms/changes approved by synods in the last several years to become imbedded in the routines used to administer the plans and in the collective mind of the denomination and plan participants.*

A reading of the section of this document (pages 22 to 25) that describes the recent reforms in the design and administration of the plans is useful

to an understanding of what motivated the pension trustees to include this element in the strategic plan. It follows naturally from the first element of the plan, and it serves as a reminder that implementation of changes previously initiated should not be overtaken by new initiatives that arguably are the most far-reaching of all the changes introduced since the inception of the plans.

How much time is needed to process recent reforms/changes? There is not a clear way to measure the amount of time required for these processes. But experience indicates that frequently several years are needed for challenges to be considered by the pension trustees and synods and for administrative methodologies involving such things as changes to software systems, billing protocols, allocation of credited service, communication, and the like.

Synod 2003 approved new protocols for the grant of credited service to persons serving in the parish ministry. These new protocols were effective January 1, 2004, and they survived significant challenges (five overtures and one communication) at Synod 2004, and are now fairly well accepted. Systems and administrative protocols needed to make these changes effective are up and running. Synod 2003 also approved a change in the disability protections historically offered by the plans. These changes, also effective January 1, 2004, required a significant amount of effort to implement them – a task made easier by the absence of any significant challenge to synod's decision.

For the denomination's endorsed chaplains, Synod 2004 introduced changes that served to link payment of costs and participation in the plans – effective January 1, 2006. As was anticipated, opposition to this change has been voiced by some chaplains, and challenges at Synod 2005 would not be a surprise. And, the task assigned to the BOT of finding the money and formulating the rules for participation in a transitional assistance fund have only begun. However, it would seem that, in spite of an implementation date that is over a year away, any significant challenge (and the work needed to respond) would be presented at Synod 2005. In addition, while challenges may be loudly voiced, most agree that changes to the funding of chaplain's pension costs were overdue and that the actions by Synod 2004 were well grounded.

So what are the time constraints suggested by this element of the strategic plan and by the foregoing discussion? Looking at the matter solely from this perspective, and ignoring for the moment any consideration of the financial/regulatory aspects of the matter, it seems clear that Synod 2005 would not be the appropriate time. It seems clear that the appropriate time will depend on the unfolding of future events, such that any current

prediction, other than to say that it will be a future synod, would not be appropriate.

3. *Allow time for the development of the benefits that are anticipated to result from the recent reforms/changes to the design of the plans, and allow for application of the energies and attention of staff and trustees to achieve needed improvements to the financial viability of the plans.*

The change to funding the annual costs of the plans from ministry shares to billings was needed to provide a more secure funding base for the plans. However, the same change took responsibility for funding the pension costs of chaplains' participation away from the chaplains committee and added it to the newly approved billing system administered by the pension trustees. The first change provided a more secure source of funding, but the second separated the endorsement process from the financial consequences (cost) resulting from endorsement, a separation that has caused some amount of difficulty and has only recently been addressed by Synod 2004.

The changes to the plans approved by synods in 1999 and 2001 significantly enhanced retirement benefits and, in so doing, made the plans more valuable for participants and more expensive for the denomination, its sponsor. However, in the view of the pension trustees, synod, and, most certainly, plan participants, the enhancements were needed.

While the changes in 1999 and 2001 made the plans more expensive for its sponsor, the changes approved by synods in 2002 and 2003 should serve to enhance their financial viability. Linking payment of costs (direct costs of participation or, if greater, full costs based on church membership) with the grant of credited service were very significant reforms that are expected to be of significant, long-term assistance to the plans. Similarly, the requirement that payment be made for upgrading previously frozen interests is expected to have a positive, long-term financial effect. However, while these changes were needed, the effect on the plans is not expected to be dramatic in the short term – they will require some time for the full benefit to be realized.

The other side of what's suggested by this element of the strategic plan has to do with the performance of the plans' investment portfolios. The years beginning with 2000 served to acquaint the pension trustees with the downside of the financial markets. And, while 2003 was notable for significant recovery of portfolio values, there is a long way to go before the plans will even approach equilibrium between portfolio values and amounts owed participants for past service.

How much time will be required for needed increases in portfolio values relative to liabilities? The answer to that question depends on the efficiencies garnered from reforms/changes to the design of the plans and on the performance of the financial markets. Between the two, it appears that performance of the financial markets (and of the plan's money managers) will have the largest impact and may require the length of the upside of a business cycle to fully realize. This leads us directly into consideration of the final element of this strategic plan.

4. *Identify a description of "financial viability" and a process that, once financial viability is achieved, would mandate and achieve serious consideration of migrating to a defined contribution form.*

In January 2001, the pension trustees addressed the need for policy guidelines for measuring the adequacy of the funded status of the plans. It was believed that the plans would be well served by some agreed-to guidelines that would serve to provide a policy context in which significant issues facing the plans might be addressed. Following some research and deliberation, they approved a long-term funding policy that:

- * Targets a ratio of plan assets to plan liabilities of between 110% and 125% on a combined basis,
- * Requires that the funded position of each plan, Canadian and U.S., be maintained at approximately the same ratio, plus or minus approximately 10%, and
- * Request that the trustees regularly review the result of applying these guidelines and consider such adjustments as may be needed to insure compliance.

It's important to remember that these guidelines were approved in the context of a continuation of the defined benefit plan form. Nonetheless, they do address the question of adequacy of funding, albeit it in a different context.

Focusing on the more direct question of financial viability and how it is to be described, any description needs to begin with adequate funding of the plan's obligations to those (retirees and others) remaining in the current (old) plan, and its obligation to those changing to a new plan. Additionally, funding would be required to pay the expenses associated with converting to a new plan form.

- * Those remaining in the old plan would need to be assigned a portfolio sufficient in size to guarantee them full satisfaction of their claims. In addition, some recognition would need to be given to fulfillment of the Plan's requirement to review the adequacy of benefits at least every three years and consider the possibility of any enhancements. This requirement needs to be recognized in the funding provided for those staying in the old plan.

The guarantee of full satisfaction of their claims and the fulfillment of the requirement to review benefits at least every three years and adjust them when indicated would require a portfolio heavily weighted in the direction of fixed income obligations. As such, it must be assigned an assumed portfolio earnings rate appropriate to its asset allocation.

- * For those changing to the new plan there would need to be assets sufficient to fully satisfy their claim on the old plan. In this case, there would be no need to assume a portfolio earnings rate as once the change had been made to the new defined contribution plan such assumptions would no longer apply.
- * Finally, sufficient resources would be required to pay costs incurred in designing a new plan and obtaining the needed regulatory and other approvals, as well as the costs of implementation. It is estimated that such costs would total approximately \$200,000.

Given all the foregoing, financial viability nearly will have been achieved when plan assets have reached a level that's equal to its liabilities. That should mark the occasion for the beginning of the mandated "serious consideration of migrating to a defined contribution form." Financial viability will have been achieved when asset values are sufficient to fund the claims to retirement benefits for those remaining in the old plan, for those changing to the new, and for the payment of the cost of professional services and other expenses associated with the transition.

The planning process whereby "serious consideration is given to migrating to a defined contribution form" will be an interactive one. In other words, the process that's begun when plan assets reach the level of its liabilities will identify the specific design for the new plan and the transition from old to new. The transition from old to new may take any one of a number of forms each of which would require a specific level of funding, or portfolio values. This means that achievement of financial viability, signaling a readiness for change, will depend on the specific shape of the change that's proposed.

How the process is structured will depend on circumstances existing at the time asset levels relative to plan liabilities indicate that a process of serious consideration should begin. The experience of the pension trustees in using a trustee mandated and organized design/planning committee is one model for structuring the effort that should be considered.

Experience indicates that the process, once begun, should be sustained, and it should be supported by a level of effort and commitment that's equal to the task. To put the matter another way, once begun, the matter should be pursued vigorously and uniformly until a new plan is identified, approved, and implemented, or until it becomes evident that change to a defined contribution plan is no longer considered wise or is determined to be not possible.

PART TWO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

THE PLANS,
UNDERLYING ISSUES AND CURRENT CONTEXT

The Plans and the Benefits They Provide

For years, the Christian Reformed Church has maintained defined benefit pension plans for ordained ministers of the Word serving in the United States and Canada. While the plans in the United States and Canada mirror each other to the extent possible, distinctly separate plans are needed to comply with pension regulation in each jurisdiction.

The U.S. plan is administered by five synodically appointed U.S. Pension Trustees and, similarly, the Canadian plan by five Canadian Pension Trustees. Collectively, these plans are referred to as the Ministers' Pension Plan, or the Plan. Much of the work of the pension trustees is done in joint session, while separate sessions of the boards are required for matters that are unique to one or the other of the plans. Day-to-day administration is provided by the Pension Office located in the denominational building in Grand Rapids; however, the administration of the Canadian Plan is facilitated by the use of mailing and other administrative capacities available in the denomination's Burlington office.

The primary purpose of the Plan is to provide retirement benefits, and that is the focus of most of the governance, investment, and administrative activities of the pension trustees and staff. But the Plan also provides significant survivor and orphan benefits. And, while disability benefits are no longer provided directly by the Plan, disability benefits accompany active participation in the Plan.

Primary benefits available through the Plan include the following:

- Retirement benefits commencing at age 65 or early retirement benefits in a reduced amount beginning at age 55.
- Long-term disability benefits provided for all active participants in the Plan.
- Survivors' benefits paid to a surviving spouse when death of a member occurs while in active service.
- Orphan benefits paid to a member's orphaned children up to age 18, or to age 21 if in school.

The Plan offers a variety of benefit forms at the point of retirement that are intended to be actuarial equivalents of the Plan's basic benefit form. While any one of a variety of benefit forms could have been chosen as the basic (normal) form, the Plan uses the form that provides a joint benefit, with the benefit provided to a surviving spouse expressed as a percentage of the benefit actually received by the retiree at the time of death. These

are 80% of the retiree's benefit that was determined at a 1.1% factor, and 66-2/3% of the amount determined by application of a 1.46% factor.

Assuming the Plan's normal benefit form were chosen at the point of retirement, a member retiring in mid 2005 after 37 years of active participation in the U.S. plan would receive monthly benefits following retirement of approximately \$1,625, and a surviving spouse would receive approximately \$1,165. A Canadian pastor having a similar retirement date and record of service would receive a monthly retirement benefit of approximately \$1,700, and a surviving spouse approximately \$1,220. When the higher multiple is fully in effect, it is expected that governmental retirement benefits provided by social legislation added to the benefits paid by the Plan will replace approximately 70% of the average preretirement income (including housing) of those serving in the parish ministry.

Fundamental, Long-Term Issues Facing the Plan

The pension trustees have had a number of discussions regarding the context in which the plans operate and the fundamental, underlying, long-term issues confronting the plans. They've observed that many of these issues are the same as those confronting the majority of defined benefit plans in the United States and Canada. Some of the findings and observations identified in these discussions motivated the pension trustees to recommend changes in the design of the plans, particularly the changes needed to link payment of costs and the grant of credited service. Certain of the findings and observations that surfaced in these discussions pointed to shifts in attitudes and circumstances that compelled the pension trustees to consider a larger question of whether the basic defined benefit form continues to be the most appropriate plan form for the denomination and its ministers.

The more significant of the findings and observations that surfaced in these discussions as long-term, fundamental, underlying issues or concerns are summarized as follows:

* Attitudes Are Changing

Discussions with persons having long involvement with the Ministers' Pension Plans indicate that the plans were introduced in a time when denominational cohesion and identity, at least with respect to denominationally sponsored retirement plans, was greater than what seems currently to be the case. Currently, the focus seems to have tilted toward viewing the denomination as a source of benefits with less focus on the need to provide the financial support required to pay them.

The significant portfolios held by the plans and the income received by them from churches make the plans vulnerable to unfounded claims. In some settings, portfolio values have been held up as evidence that the plans can afford increased benefits, or that they should retroactively include persons having previously

declined to register or who have delayed or broken records of participation. They are reason for some to believe that applications for benefits made by persons not entitled to them under the provisions of the plans should be granted.

In significant part, plan participation and funding depend on the voluntary willingness of participants and others to respect the intent (expressed and implied) of the rules and protocols established for the administration and funding of the plans. Absent voluntary willingness, more explicit rules will be needed to insure the orderly funding and administration of the plans, or so it would seem.

* Career Patterns Are Changing

Most observers agree that life-long employment by a single employer is becoming the exception rather than the norm. The norm seems to have shifted in the direction of multiple employers and, frequently, multiple careers over the span of one's working life. In short, career mobility has become the expected pattern, and benefit structures that are aligned with this reality are the most valued.

Persons serving the denomination as its pastors are not immune to these realities. Evidence of that may be seen in the number of persons entering the ministry as a second or third career choice, as well as those leaving it to pursue other careers or professions. For these persons, benefit plans that offer the maximum degree of portability are preferred.

* Denominational Demographics Are Shifting

The number of participants in the plans is increasing while, at the same time, reported denominational membership is decreasing. Over the last ten years, the number of participants in the plans has increased over 16% while, in the same decade, the number of adult professing members of organized churches declined nearly 10%. And, when one looks only at the number of "active" ministers (not retired) the increase over 1994 is 5.6% (all attributable to the U.S.), and the number of retired pastors has increased 49.8%.

When changes in the numbers of plan participants are displayed along with percentages, the trends are even more apparent - as follows:

<u>Retired</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Total</u>
1994	288	43	331
2004	<u>388</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>496</u>

Increase	100	65	165
Increase as a %	34.7%	151.2%	49.8%

<u>Active</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Total</u>
1994	800	229	1,029
2004	<u>860</u>	<u>227</u>	<u>1,087</u>
Increase	60	-2	58
Increase as a %	7.5%	-.5%	5.6%

<u>Retired and Active</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Total</u>
Increase	<u>160</u>	<u>63</u>	223
Increase as a %	14.7%	23.2%	16.4%

When changes in membership statistics for the denomination are examined, the differences are not increases, as is the case with the number of plan participants, but rather decreases – as follows:

	<u>Professing Members 18 and Older</u>		<u>All Members/ Churches</u>
	<u>Organized Churches</u>	<u>All Churches</u>	
1994	170,639	174,049	300,320
2004*	<u>154,228</u>	<u>158,780</u>	<u>255,772</u>
Decrease	16,411	15,269	44,548
As a %	9.6%	8.8%	14.8%

(Member counts indicated for 2004 are net of inactive, professing members totaling 19,936.)

Adult professing members classified as inactive and numbering 19,936 now comprise over 11% of all professing members age 18 and over. While the number of professing members who were inactive in 1994 is unknown, they were

included in membership counts for purposes of expected denominational ministry share or quota payments.

What are we to make of all this? Well, the most important observation is also the most obvious one – there is a significantly smaller membership base (excluding inactive members), or a relatively static membership base (if all inactive members are included) available to pay the retirement costs of an increased number of plan participants, both active and retired. In the context of a defined benefit retirement plan that is a troubling reality - ignoring it would be irresponsible.

* **Congregational Demographics Are, Likewise, Shifting**

While information regarding shifts in the last ten years in the number of congregations is not as readily available, recent studies indicate that the number of smaller churches is growing and the number of members in each smaller church is declining. At the same time, the number of large churches is declining, and the number of members in each is, likewise, declining. In 2003, the ratio of smaller churches on the receiving end of pension cost subsidies and larger churches on the paying end was approximately 2 to 1.

In 2004, payment of the full cost of pension participation by means of per member assessments would require 226 active, adult professing members for an organized church in the United States, and would require 250 in Canada. If the funding protocols had not been changed for 2004, the ratio of churches receiving a subsidy to those paying the subsidy would have increased to approximately 3 to 1 in the United States and 4 to 1 in Canada.

* **Changing Demographics and the Realities of Funding the Plans**

The shifts in demographics described in the foregoing present issues that have very significant long-term importance to the Plans. Negative trends in denominational membership numbers and increasing numbers of plan participants constitute a troubling combination. In short, defined benefit pension plans have very long-term obligations defined by plan provisions that, if one were motivated to do so, are very difficult to change and, as a practical matter, can be satisfied only by full and faithful payment of promised benefits.

Negative effects associated with a diminished funding base are compounded by yearly increases in final average salaries that, in turn, cause corresponding increases in the Plan's accumulated past service liabilities. A relatively static or diminishing base on the sponsoring (income) side of the equation, and a fixed and growing funding need on the participant (payment) side present challenges that are increasingly difficult to address.

These five observations, taken together, provide sufficient reason to ask whether a continuation of the defined benefit form (DB form) is appropriate for the denomination and its ministers now and in the future. Taken together, they suggest that the pension trustees should be concerned regarding the continued sustainability and appropriateness of the current design.

Issues Facing Plan Participants

Having identified some of the underlying forces that push in the direction of change, it was thought necessary to consider a significant, underlying set of observations and findings that are directly related to the discussion and to the particular priorities of plan participants.

Several years ago, the pension trustees formulated a series of proposals intended to provide a variety of benefit forms offered to ministers at the point of retirement. Eventually, in addition to the Plan's traditional "normal" form, the trustees recommended (and synod approved) the addition of twelve additional benefit forms, for a total of thirteen. In the conversations that involved these optional forms, some asked: Why do the proposals not include the possibility of a lump-sum option at the point of retirement?

The answer to the question of why a lump-sum option was not recommended was summarized in a listing of some "particular" and some "general" reasons why such an option was considered unwise. In significant part, the discussion of this matter and the listing of responses to it involved judgements regarding the assumption of risk. Namely, the appetite and the capacity that pastors have for assuming the significant market and mortality risks that are associated with receipt of a lump sum at the point of retirement. These are issues that apply equally to the discussion of the basic form of the Plan that is the focus of this strategic planning document.

In summary, these earlier discussions, including reasons (particular and general) for not offering a lump-sum option at the point of retirement, are as follows:

Particular

- * The plans are defined benefit plans and, as such, place all market and mortality risk on the Plan and its sponsors. By means of a survey of all participants, it was established that the majority prefer this form and do not support any conversion to the defined contribution form that would place market and mortality risk on them.

The idea of introducing a lump-sum option at the point of retirement seemed inconsistent with participants' disinterest in assuming risk. It should be noted that survey responses indicated that participants do support the introduction of

choices at the point of retirement, including a lump-sum option. However, a larger message seemed clear: Participants did not wish to assume risk and they preferred the defined benefit plan form.

- * Somewhat related to the foregoing is the notion that the inclusion of a lump-sum option in the benefit array of a defined benefit plan is inconsistent with the philosophy underlying the defined benefit form, and, because participants would make choices that are in their perceived interest, offering this option would bring a new annual cost to the plans.

In addition, to the extent that historically the Plan's earnings rates on invested assets have exceeded actuarial assumptions, the plans would forego the opportunity to do the same in the future with funds paid for lump sums. In recent years, these opportunities have furnished some of the means needed to finance plan enhancements.

- * Receipt of a lump-sum distribution would carry with it the consequence that no future enhancements of plan benefits would be available to persons receiving such amounts, nor would the support of the special assistance fund be available to them. In this regard, these persons would receive essentially the same treatment as members of the denomination's plan for nonordained employees.
- * For years, plan trustees and administrators have suggested that plan participants build their own, private "third leg" to the retirement stool. Usually, the assumption of some risk is necessary to do so, and combining a relatively risk free defined benefit plan with risks inherent in private savings and investment efforts seems to be a good balance. In other words, the absence of risk associated with benefits paid by the plans should enable participants to absorb greater risk in the context of their private savings and investment programs.

General

- * Some believe that the biggest worry retirees have is whether they will have sufficient resources to avoid becoming dependent on others, especially on children and their spouses. Whether or not this is the number-one fear that retirees have, a case can be made that the availability of a lump-sum option increases the likelihood of such fears being realized.
- * The plans are likely more efficient managers of money than would be any retiree (or, for that matter, persons in the active ministry). They are more efficient in the sense that it can do it at less cost for money management and, generally, given professional management and low transaction costs, with greater returns. This means, one would conclude, that, in the long run, benefit amounts would be greater in the context of a professionally managed plan.

- * Retirement plans should not be viewed as devices for the accumulation of transferable wealth. They should remain what they were originally intended to be - devices for the provision of a level of income during the retirement years of participants and their spouses and as a means of providing protections against the financial consequences of early death or disability. Accordingly, the expectation that these plans should serve as vehicles for the accumulation of capital is inappropriate.
- * In a large member population such as the one we are dealing with, there will likely be some that will suffer hardship as a result of the introduction of a lump-sum option. It would be safe to say that if a significant number of persons elect to receive a lump-sum distribution at the point of retirement and thereby fully assume the risks associated with the market and their own life expectancies, some will suffer as a result of it.
- * Containment of risk inclines one to be conservative in the choices made that involve risk. The decision to receive a lump-sum distribution may (likely “will”) induce conservative behaviors that will diminish living standards during retirement years in order to avoid the specter of “running out.”

These were the important considerations for not offering a lump-sum option at retirement, and, by extension, it makes a case to stay with the defined benefit form. How these concerns weigh in the balance of the larger discussion is another question.

Finally, Issues Regarding the Plan’s Funded Position

Plan assets are invested in balanced portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines approved by synod in 1998, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees. Their primary goal, set for them by the pension trustees, is to provide an above-average return and at the same time preserve principal.

In down markets, above-average returns are little comfort as portfolio balances decline and short-term funding becomes a challenge. However, on balance, it must be remembered that the plans are very long-term investors and the pension trustees have not attempted to “time the markets” with large moves in and out of equity positions spurred by timed changes in portfolio asset allocation. Such an approach to investing, although appealing at times, has been demonstrated to be distinctly unrewarding. It must be remembered that, in significant part, the plans' long-term financial performance has made it possible to provide the level of current and future benefits.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of June 30, 2003, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$100,000,000 for the U.S. plan and as of December 31, 2003, it was approximately \$31,400,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the cost

of the changes approved by synod in 2003 and represent the obligations that the plans have to over 1,800 active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2003	December 31, 2002
United States (U.S. \$)	\$89,047,000	\$77,517,000
Canada (Can. \$)	\$23,392,000	\$21,272,000

Current portfolio values have improved slightly since 2003.

Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	2003	2002	2001	2000	5yrs	10yrs
Canada	12.7%	-4.4%	-4.5%	-0.9%	2.8%	7.7%
U.S.	20.0%	-10.5%	-1.6%	1.0%	3.4%	8.8%

Dividends, interest, and long-term appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings are used to provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to their active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries. As portfolio performance statistics indicate, the plans have participated in the upside of financial markets and have suffered from market declines witnessed in the last three years. On balance, the pension trustees are grateful for long-term portfolio performance and are mindful of both the long-term nature of the plans' obligations and the corresponding long-term nature of its investment policies and objectives as well as its funding needs.

While long-term performance of the portfolios has been good, the amount by which plan liabilities exceed plan assets presents a distinct funding challenge. In general terms, the plans are required to make up this funding shortfall over a period of fifteen years. In short, the plans are required to fund the amortization of unfunded past service costs, plus interest, over a period not to exceed fifteen years.

The need to fund past service costs serves to significantly increase the annual costs of the plans. For the Canadian Plan, the 2004 minimum contribution requirement totals \$1,519,999, of which \$854,000 is current service cost, and the balance, \$665,000, is required to provide for unfunded past service costs, including interest thereon. Minimum contributions for the U.S. plan total \$4,520,000, of which \$1,518,000 is required to pay unfunded past service costs, including interest.

RECENT REFORMS IN THE
DESIGN AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PLAN

Changes to the Plan

The Plan has changed significantly since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. The basic form of the Plan was not altered - they retained their largely traditional defined benefit form. However, while the basic form was retained, some of the changes served to significantly improve benefits provided by the Plan, others clarified how the Plan is administered, and yet others improved the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans made by recent synods include the following:

By Synod in:

- 1997 Changed funding for first or only pastors and chaplains from ministry shares to per member billings.
- 1999 Changed the "multiple" used to determine benefit amounts from 1.10% to 1.46% for credited service beginning January 1, 2000.

Survivor benefit amount changed from 80% to 66 2/3% for benefit amounts determined using the 1.46% multiple.

Early retirement reduction factor changed to .3% from .6% per month.

Increased retiree's benefits by 2% per year for each year of retirement during the period July 1, 1992, through December 31, 1998.

Required that adjustments to benefit amounts be considered at least every three years.

Performed a general rewriting of the plans to ensure that, among other things, the two plans conform to each other as much as possible.

- 2001 Approval of a variety of benefit forms in addition to the Plan's normal form.

Application of the 1.46% multiple made applicable to all service beginning January 1, 1985.

- 2003 Approved guidelines for part-time service.

Required payment for upgrading the interests of previously frozen participants reinstated as active members of the plans.

Acted to replace self-insured disability benefits with an insurance contract.

Change in funding protocols for all organized churches, effective January 1, 2004, requiring payment of the greater of direct costs or per member assessments.

Linked timely payment of annual costs (the greater of participant or per member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors or organized churches.

- 2004 Required that the pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the Plan, effective January 1, 2006.

Approved a rule requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised regarding the proposed action by the pension trustees.

Amended Church Order Article 15 to include specific elements of “proper support,” including payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan.

By the BOT

- 2004 Resolved that the BOT, in connection with its annual budget process, will determine the number of endorsed chaplains in need of funding and inform the pension trustees.

By the Pension Trustees:

- 2004 By administrative rule - established guidelines for determination of offsets for interests earned in other plans by chaplains for the same service as is counted as credited service by the ministers’ pension plans.

Taken together, these changes and clarifications have significantly improved the design and administration of the plans, and they benefit plan participants, the denomination as sponsor, and the Plan itself. They should, if not reversed and if administered fairly, improve the financial viability and long-term staying power of the plans.

Status of Implementation

The Plan is becoming an increasingly complex device. Improvements to the design and administration of the Plan have served to increase its complexity and the level of effort needed for day-to-day administration, and this is particularly true of some of the more recent changes in design, including the following:

- * The change in disability benefits from a self-insured model to a fully insured disability plan. Challenges in this regard include the self-billing routines needed for payment of premiums, and, related to that, obtaining compensation information from all active participants that's needed for participation.
- * Changes made to the billing and payment protocols for all of the denomination's organized churches. This change was effective January 1, 2004, and required significant systems changes, special communication efforts, and ongoing monitoring.
- * Linking the grant of credited service to pastors serving the denomination's organized churches to the payment amounts billed, effective January 1, 2004. Administration of this change required all of the systems, communication, and monitoring as was required for the corresponding change in billing and payment protocols.
- * Administration of the synodically approved requirement that employers pay the costs of participation for the denomination's endorsed chaplains as a condition for continued active participation in the plans and the grant of credited service. This change has a January 1, 2006, effective date and has required significant amounts of time for group and individual communication. This change in funding protocols for chaplains was approved by synod 2004 and will require a sustained effort to make it work.

Changes to the design of the plans follow what is now a nearly predictable pattern. It's a pattern that involves documentation and submission of requests to synod, defense of recommendations in the settings of the synodical finance committee and on the floor of synod itself, and defense against claims that the processes weren't sufficiently open or fair. Once approved by synod, we've come to expect challenges to synod's work that are presented in the form of overtures and communications to the synod or synods following the year of change. The pension trustees and the pension office are engaged in the post-synod portion of this pattern with respect to changes made to the funding of chaplains' pensions.

Changes are not easily made in this context and, once made, the challenge of sustaining them frequently is difficult. Time is required for changes to systems and administrative protocols, for the efforts needed to inform and educate plan participants, and for challenges to be presented, considered, and set aside. In fact, over the last year or so we've had some concern that we not exceed the denomination's capacity to process change in ways that are orderly and well understood. That concern has influenced this strategic planning process.

DECISION TO CONSIDER CONVERSION TO A
DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PLAN FORM

Background

On September 11, 2003, the pension trustees' Joint Design/Planning Committee (the Committee) spent some time in a review and discussion of its mandate and the status of its work, including consideration of the portion of the mandate involving changing the plans from their present defined benefit form to a defined contribution form. Following that review and discussion, a recommendation (in the form of minute D09-15) was approved for consideration by the joint pension trustees. This minute contained several recommendations, including one involving chaplains and another concerning the basic form of the plans.

Regarding the form of the plans, the Committee approved the following recommendation, which was then considered and approved by the joint pension trustees on September 12, 2003:

Staff be requested to research the possible conversion of the plans from the defined benefit to the defined contribution form, with such research to identify optional ways in which such conversion might be pursued and the issues attached to each of the options, and that

Following such research and subsequent analysis of findings, staff be requested to prepare a report for presentation to the Committee that contains an outline of findings, a description and analysis of the findings, and a discussion of recommended courses of actions for consideration by the committee.

The trustees then turned their attention to consideration of whether it would be possible to consider matters involving chaplains and those of changing the plan form at the same time. Or, alternatively, whether one should precede the other. After discussion, the following was approved by the Committee and, subsequently, adopted by the joint pension trustees.

Matters concerning chaplain participation should be taken up first, with matters involving changing the plans to the defined contribution form to be taken up following.

"Matters concerning chaplains" have been acted on by Synod 2004.

Perspectives Offered by the Plan's Professional Advisors

Each of the plans professional advisors was asked for a summary of their experience regarding conversions from the defined benefit (DB) to the defined contribution (DC) form. Responses from all three advisors were received and furnished to the pension trustees, as well as some additional material received from Deloitte.

While the responses received from each firm are helpful in understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each plan form, the response from Deloitte (Randy Reitsma) was particularly helpful in its description of options. Subsequently, Randy sent some information on single premium annuity rates and the text of a presentation made earlier this year on the appropriateness of defined benefit and defined contribution plan forms.

Each of the firms is ready and willing to provide additional assistance and advice. However, until the pension trustees have come to grips with some general direction (or several clearly described alternatives) that are worth pursuing, it seemed that significant involvement of one or more of the firms in actuarial, regulatory, and financial research would be premature. A better course would be to identify the context in which we are working and the values that are important to the denomination and its pastors. Having clear notions of context and values would provide a framework for discussion of the options, or so it would seem.

Values are Important

Plan sponsors have a variety of reasons for using a particular plan form and, for that matter, for changing from one to another. It seems clear that certain changes in plan form may bring subsets of participants (for example, older vs. younger, active vs. retired) less than an equal advantages or disadvantages. For these and other reasons, the pension trustees decided that it would be well to identify broadly what values should guide the processes and, eventually, the selection of a particular course of action.

The discussion of values resulted in the identification of several that the pension trustees believed important. They are short, focused, and include the following:

- * When separated into groups by age, that the younger participant group not be given any advantage at the expense of the older. The reverse also, that the older group not be advantaged at the expense of the younger.
- * That the economic value provided to those participating in any alternate plan be approximately the same as the value provided to those participating in the present defined benefit plan.
- * That the cost to the plan sponsor(s) of any alternate plan be approximately the same as the cost of the present defined benefit plan. However, this value is not

intended to preclude consideration of any possible partial funding of costs, optional or required, by plan participants.

- * Whatever plan form is adopted, that all obligations assumed by the employer/sponsor will be fully satisfied by regular (each pay day, month, or quarter, as the case may be) deposits of amounts required by the Plan.
- * Finally, that the cost of participation be funded by the minister's direct employer and that faithful payment of such amounts be a continuing expectation associated with recognition as an organized or emerging church.

Options Are Limited

A couple of things are clear: one, that the funded position of the plans has a very limiting effect on choices, and, two, that there is a confusing array of possibilities in this business. Research indicates that basic plan forms are not difficult to identify, understand, and describe; However, the nuances and combinations are nearly infinite, or so it seems. However, the trustees observed that if one stays within the confines of identified values the field narrows, at least to some degree.

First, a couple of things regarding the present plans seem clear, as follows:

- * Whatever direction the pension trustees decide to pursue, they cannot (and would not want to if they could) avoid the need to fund accumulated past service costs.
- * As a practical matter, it is not possible to terminate the plans in the absence of adequate funding for presently retired pastors and without adequate provision for funding costs associated with past service.
- * In the face of the foregoing realities, any change to a new plan would need to occur over a period of years while the present plans are maintained and provisions are implemented to fully fund the obligations they present.

Alternatives Were Explored

Against the background of all the foregoing, the pension trustees considered the following alternatives:

- * Stay the Course

One could make the case that a discussion (argument) that takes fully into account the interests, concerns, and limitations of the plan sponsor (the denomination and its members) and the plan participants (ministers and their

families) would be settled in favor of a continuation of the present defined benefit form.

Included in the factors that may influence such a discussion is the recently established connection between payment of costs and award of credited service that may serve to put the funding of the plans on a more rational, sustainable footing. If true, one could reason that these reforms should be given time and opportunity to yield the promised fruit. In addition, maximum funding would serve to eliminate unfunded past service costs and associated annual expense.

If these things were to be accomplished, not only would the plans be on a more firm financial foundation, they would be less expensive to maintain as annual costs would no longer include amortization and interest brought about by underfunding.

* Stay the Course and Prepare for Change

It became increasingly apparent that the existence of significant amounts of unfunded past service costs and historically low interest rates serve to severely restrict available options for change. This is because the promises made to the current population of retired and active ministers must be fulfilled, and, of course, they must be funded. Introduction of a new plan would not eliminate that reality. In fact, one of the promises made to current plan participants is that increases in benefits will be considered at intervals of no more than three years. Any carving out of a portion of the portfolio to fund pension claims of current retirees and active participants would need to consider the full meaning of that promise.

Assuming for a moment that arguments for change carry the most weight, one approach may be to retain the present plan form until conditions are ripe to achieve the kind and degree of change that may best serve the long-term interests of the denomination and its ministers. What would those conditions be? Likely, they would be portfolio values that match or, preferably, exceed plan liabilities, and long-term interest rates that come close to assumed portfolio earnings rates. What would be the kind and degree of change that would best serve? That's a question that engendered significant discussion and settled in favor of something along the lines of the RCA plan, modified such that conversion to an annuity (or a significantly similar alternate) at the point of retirement would be strongly encouraged, if not required.

* Forge Ahead with What Seems Possible

The pension trustees observed that a case can be made that little constructive change would occur if entirely suitable conditions were always a prerequisite for

action. Some believe that “change is pain” and organizations, like people, are inclined to avoid pain by avoiding change. It’s also suggested by some that it’s possible for organizational paralysis to result from an appetite for analysis - a sort of analysis produced organizational paralysis.

It was agreed that there’s at least some truth in these observations as well as the notion that needed change should be pursued regardless of whether or not conditions are optimal. In this spirit, and within limitations of what’s feasible, introduction of a DC plan for those newly entering the ministry could be pursued while, at the same time, maintaining the old plan for the current participant population. This would be a very slow process, as complete conversion wouldn’t be a reality for decades into the future.

The pension trustees discussed an additional possibility - if a DC plan were to be created for those newly entering the ministry, it may be possible to amend the DC plan in the future to allow for transfers to it of individual interests in the DB plan. Or, for that matter, to write the new DC plan such that such transfers to it are possible at the time certain conditions are satisfied. Such amendments (if needed) and transfers could be made when conditions (funded status of the DB plan, interest rates, among other things) are favorable.

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes the publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are: Rev. Michael De Vries (2006, second term); Rev. Lugene Schemper (2005, one-year appointment to complete the second term of Dr. Harry Boonstra); Mrs. Janet Sheeres, chair (2007, second term); Dr. Robert Swierenga (2007, second term); and Dr. Richard Harms, secretary (ex officio).

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives, which are housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. As archivist, he serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College. Other staff include: Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, librarian-archivist; Ms. Boukje Leegwater, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; Ms. Nateisha De Cruz, and Ms. Kay Bykerk, student assistants; and Dr. Henry Ippel, Mr. Floyd Antonides, Rev. Henry DeMots, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Hendrick Harms, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, and Rev. Leonard Sweetman.

III. Archival work during 2004

A. Following a report that one of our regional representatives had died, we contacted each of the forty-seven designated representatives or stated clerks and learned that nineteen positions needed new appointments. Working with the classes, we were able to fill seventeen of these slots. In classes without a designated regional representative, we funnel our communication through the stated clerk (in some classes the stated clerk has accepted the appointment as the regional representative). We maintained regular contact with all forty-seven classes by way of these contact people to report on the programs of the archives.

B. Archival records from eighty-three CRCNA congregations (nine more than last year) were received, microfilmed, and returned. Among these were two congregations, more than twenty years old, that participated for the first time: First CRC of Port Alberni, British Columbia, organized in 1951; and Glad Tidings CRC of Edmonton, Alberta, organized in 1976. We also microfilmed the records of three Christian school organizations. The microfilm copies are stored in our vault and are available only with the written permission of the individual congregation or school.

All congregations in five classes (Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, and Thornapple Valley) that were scheduled to have their minutes microfilmed within the last ten years have done so. Due to the frequency of reports of missing records, these congregations and classes are to be commended for their total participation in this important work.

C. Official classical minutes were received from all forty-seven classes. This is the first time in a number of years that we have had total participation in this,

and the committee thanks the stated clerks for their cooperation. Anniversary materials were received from thirteen Christian Reformed churches.

D. All of the congregations organized before 1980 that have not sent their records continue to be contacted by way of telephone, e-mail, regular mail, and personal contacts. The following, organized prior to 1970, have not had their records microfilmed (year of organization in parentheses)—the Archives will continue to encourage the officers of these congregations to make use of this service:

Exeter, ON (1952)

Farmington, NM – Maranatha (1962)

Fountain Valley, CA – Fellowship Community (1967)

Grangeville, ID (1927)

Portland, OR – Oak Hills (1965)

Portland, OR – Parklane (1959)

Stony Plain, AB (1908)

E. The department published the twenty-third newsletter, which was distributed to all regional representatives, stated clerks of classes, the Dutch American Historical Commission, relevant periodical editors, and other interested people in the denomination.

F. We continue the process of converting our most-used genealogical resources to file formats compatible with online availability to reduce an ever-growing reference load. The latest addition to this effort is a listing of marriages performed by the Revs. Douwe J. Vander Werp and Roelof T. Kuiper while pastors in Graafschap (Michigan) Christian Reformed Church, and the membership records of the Perch Lake CRC, Perch Lake, Michigan. Links to these materials can be found at http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/in_house_resources.htm. We have completed keying in cataloging data of about seven thousand of our audio recordings (reel-to-reel, cassette, and compact disk formats) into a campuswide database. This database, shared with the seminary, college audio visual and conferences, and campus events, is available for searching by way of Web access at <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/av/titles/index.htm>. Thanks to a Michigan library services and technology grant and Hekman Library staff, approximately one thousand images of Michigan churches, schools, events, and places are now in digital formats and can be viewed by way of <http://alexandria.calvin.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi4/eJDf4STXtc/255660055/503/7511>.

G. During the past year, we have processed 42 cubic feet of seminary records, 18 cubic feet of college material, and 103 cubic feet of denomination records. Among these were major additions from the general secretary's office of the Christian Reformed Church, Home Missions, and the seminary president. In addition to these 163 cubic feet of institutional records, 179 cubic feet of manuscript material from such groups as Dynamic Youth Ministries, Christian Reformed Conference Grounds, and the Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church were processed. The manuscript total also includes approximately 35 cubic feet of records from various Christian schools and other agencies related to the Dutch in North America. We also completed organizing and cataloging the records of the Midwest Sunday School

Association; The Back to God Hour-Guam program; the papers of Fred Klooster, John Hulst, and Nicholas B. Beversluis; and the cataloging of *Onze Toekomst* and the *Standaard*. In cooperation with the Meeter Center at Calvin College, we organized the Ford Lewis Battles (1915-1979) papers (33 cubic feet). Battles was the preeminent twentieth-century scholar of John Calvin. He left extensive notes and unfinished research. Unfortunately, much of his bibliographic research that led to publication was in a variety of machine-readable formats that are no longer accessible due to technology and hardware changes. Fortunately the end products of these labors, his published books, are still in a readable form.

H. Continued the translation project for early denominational and congregational minutes. Projects underway are: minutes of Luctor CRC, Luctor, Kansas; Manhattan CRC, Manhattan, Montana; and Classis Grand Rapids East, 1892-1925.

I. We contributed to the denomination's sesquicentennial planning committee, served as members of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies, and the Dutch-American Historical Commission, the college's Information Services Committee, the Historical Society of Michigan Board of Directors, and the State Historic Preservation Review Board of Michigan.

IV. Publications

The *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church* has been completed and is available (ISBN 0-9744529-0-4, \$34.95). The directory lists ministers with brief biographies; a brief history of every ministry, from organized congregations to storefront Sunday schools; lay evangelists; ministry associates (evangelists); Calvin Theological Seminary faculty; Calvin College faculty; Home Missions, World Missions, and CRWRC field staff; and chaplains from 1857-2002.

V. Recognition

A. The Committee acknowledges Rev. Lugene Schemper's acceptance to complete the one remaining year of the second term of Dr. Harry Boonstra.

B. We acknowledge the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2004:

71 years	Elco H. Oostendorp
67 years	Henry De Mots
66 years	John Blankespoor Garrett D. Pars
65 years	Lambert Doezema Repko W. Popma
64 years	Eugene Bradford Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom Garrett H. Vande Riet

63 years	John A. Botting Harold Dekker Nicholas B. Knoppers
62 years	Clarence Boomsma Edward Bossenbroek Remkes Kooistra Bastiaan Nederlof Dick J. Oostenink, Jr.
61 years	Peter Huisman John H. Olthof
60 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen Jacob D. Eppinga George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
55 years	Lugene A. Bazuin Martin D. Geleynse John A. Hoeksema Dick C. Los Lammert Slofstra Leonard F. Stockmeier
50 years	Harvey J. Baas Andrew J. Bandstra Winston C. Boelkins Dick C. Bouma Rodger J. Buining John Bylsma Ike Chang Michiel M. De Berdt Bert Den Herder John Hofman, Jr. James C. Lont Earl C. Marlink Jack J. Matheis Jan D. Pereboom Carl J. Reitsma John C. Rickers Gerald Rignalda Charles S. Steenstra John H. Stek William K. Stob Jacob W. Uitvlugt Wilbert M. Van Dyk Gerard Van Groningen Sr. Alvin H. Venema Nicholas Vogelzang Sidney H. Rooy

Hubert J. Sprik
Martin Stegink
Anthonie Vanden Einde
Maas Vander Bilt

C. The committee also reports on the following anniversaries of congregational organization:

125 years	Dispatch, KS Zutphen, MI
100 years	Grand Rapids, MI – Burton Heights Granum, AB Nobleford, AB
75 years	Momence, IL
50 years	Ann Arbor, MI Charlottetown, PE Cobourg, ON – Grace Fruitport, MI Kentville, NS La Glace, AB Lake Worth, FL Miami, FL – South Kendall Community Newmarket, ON – Bethel Palos Heights, IL Pella, IA – Calvary
25 years	Alger, WA – Alger Community Barrie, ON – Covenant Chicago, IL – Pullman Grand Ledge, MI – Covenant Palmerston, ON St. Albert, AB Syracuse, NY – Community Window Rock, AZ West Olive, MI Windsor, ON – Ambassador Community

VII. Reminders

A. We urge congregations that have or soon will observe anniversaries to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video tapes, photographs, and so forth) to the Archives. This is a convenient means for keeping a duplicate set of such materials in a secure location.

B. Of the 839 organized congregations, 659 (79%) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. This percentage of participation remains the same from last year. Due to the ongoing and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee again strongly urges the remaining 180 congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy that will be stored in an environmentally secure environment. Due to the

personal nature of the contents in some minutes that are duplicated, these microfilms are stored in a vault under absolute security. No one, including archives staff, are allowed to look at these microfilms without the permission of the individual church council written on congregational letterhead and signed by either the president or vice-president of the council/consistory.

VIII. Recommendations

A. The committee requests that Dr. Richard H. Harms be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.

B. Having completed a special one-year appointment, the committee recommends that Rev. Lugene Schemper be reappointed to a three-year term as a member of the committee.

C. The committee notices that the frequency of individual congregation's being unable to locate significant portions of councils, elders, and deacons minutes (all absolutely necessary for both congregational and legal purposes) has risen from one or two per year to more than ten during the past year. The committee asks that synod stress upon the local congregations that they diligently produce and keep these minutes; that synod emphasize that it is incumbent on retiring clerks to transfer to their successors all such records; and that newly appointed clerks make a specific effort to ensure that they receive a complete set of all minutes when they begin their term.

The committee asks that synod urge congregations to contact the Archives before discarding any copies of minutes and noncurrent membership records in order that existing gaps in the archival holdings may be filled. Further, that congregations regularly contact the archives to determine whether it is time to microfilm minutes, typically done once every ten years.

Finally, the committee requests that all classes add the Archives to their mailing lists (surface or electronic) as the most expedient means to prevent gaps from occurring in these records. We also ask that Synod remind the stated clerks of each classis that the records of discontinued ministries are to be deposited in the Archives.

Historical Committee
Michael De Vries
Lugene Schemper
Janet Sheeres, chair
Robert Swierenga
Richard Harms, secretary

I. Membership

The members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), along with the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard, (member ex officio), with the years in which their terms expire are:

- From Canada: Ms. Louisa Bruinsma (2007); Dr. Bertha Mook (2005); Dr. James Payton (2007); Rev. Richard T. Vander Vaart (2006); Rev. Ralph S. Wigboldus, vice president (2005); Rev. Simon Wolfert (2007).
- From the United States: Rev. Michiel M. De Berdt (2005); Dr. Philip V. De Jonge, president (2007), Ms. Teresa Renkema (2007); Dr. David Rylaarsdam (2006); Rev. Carlos Tapanes (2006); Mr. Abraham Vreeke (2005).

The IRC has adopted the following *modus operandi*:

- That in electing officers for our binational IRC, the president be chosen from one country and the vice president from the other, with the understanding that the vice president will assume the office of president the following year.
- That the IRC meet three times each year—in November, February, and April.
- That the IRC (ordinarily) meet once each year in Burlington, Ontario, and twice each year in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations**A. Fraternal delegates**

The IRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the Christian Reformed Church in North America is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Reformed Church in America (RCA) meeting in Wheaton, Illinois, June 3-9, 2004, Dr. Philip De Jonge.
2. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) meeting in Virginia Beach, Virginia, June 23-26, 2004, Dr. Philip De Jonge.
3. To the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ) meeting on October 18-21, 2004, Dr. Cornelius Plantinga.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the provisions of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the IRC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These appointees report to the IRC.

1. Dr. David H. Engelhard serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Dr. Johannes De Viet serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the Canadian Council of Churches.
3. Dr. George Vandervelde serves as the IRC's observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches and on the Faith

and Witness Commission of the Canadian Council of Churches. In both venues, he has been entrusted with important levels of leadership.

4. Dr. Lyle Bierma serves as the CRC member on the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.
5. Dr. David Engelhard serves as the CRCNA's representative to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).

III. Multilateral relationships-ecumenical organizations

A. *Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)*

The IRC maintains contact with the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) through its *REC News Exchange* and through its general secretary, Dr. Richard van Houten, whose office is in Grand Rapids. The Interchurch Relations Committee has appointed the following delegates to represent the CRCNA at the International Assembly of the Reformed Ecumenical Council to be held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, from July 12 to 26, 2005:

Dr. David H. Engelhard
Dr. Bertha Mook
Ms. Teresa Renkema
Rev. Ralph Wigboldus

The general secretary of the CRCNA has sent on behalf of synod a copy of the booklet, *Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist*, along with related synodical decisions to the REC for placement on the assembly's agenda in July 2005. Responses from REC will be reviewed by the IRC and presented to Synod 2006 with any additional recommendations being proposed.

B. *Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)*

The CRCNA is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The EFC focuses on bringing Christians together for greater impact in mission, ministry, and witness. It does so by working closely together for ministry empowerment and by working cooperatively to address government on current issues of interest and concern. Mr. Bruce Clemenger, the president of EFC, has expressed a desire to address the synod of the CRCNA.

C. *Canadian Council of Churches (CCC)*

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and is represented on its board by Dr. Johannes De Viet. The CCC works primarily through its Commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has had personnel on both commissions, and they have tried to make our voice heard in matters relating to ecumenical relations and to broad concerns within our culture and world.

D. *National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)—United States*

After several years of study and preparation, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has released a significant study document, "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility." The statement is concerned with the basis and method of Christian civic engagement and articulates principles of Christian political involvement. The Interchurch Relations Committee includes this document as Appendix A.

E. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

The Twenty-fourth General Council meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) was held in Accra, Ghana, July 30 through August 12, 2004. The theme for the meeting was: That All May Have Life in Fullness. While CRC observers have attended council meetings in the past, this was the first time that the CRC was officially represented as a member church. The IRC appointed Dr. David H. Engelhard as the delegate to attend the meeting in Accra. Due to higher than anticipated costs, two others who had been appointed to attend did not participate.

Appendix B is a report of the Twenty-fourth General Council of WARC. This report provides information on the composition of WARC and insight into some of the dynamics of the General Council. A reading of this document will make it clear that, while all participants appreciated the common Christian concern regarding issues of poverty and the oppressive structures that contribute to it, not all delegates were comfortable with either the decision-making process or the ideological positions expressed by the General Council.

Appendix C is the English version of "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth," a document agreed upon by the WARC General Council in Accra. This statement addresses significant issues of economic injustice and ecological destruction. Members of the Interchurch Relations Committee have serious reservations concerning the document. The use of ill-defined and often technical jargon not only makes for difficult reading but also the obstruction of the meaning of the document. Because the process of debate and discernment at the General Council was flawed, some of the ideological positions and strongly worded conclusions do not adequately represent the voices of many participant churches. Although the document is called a "confession," it is important for us to remember that it is not meant to be understood as "a classical doctrinal confession" (section 15), and it does not require the official endorsement of WARC participant churches. For that reason, the document is being passed on by the IRC to synod for its information. Hopefully the weakness of the statement will not prevent us from seeing "the urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time" (section 15).

The Interchurch Relations Committee also appends for information the following documents from the Twenty-fourth General Council of WARC:

Appendix D: Mission Section Plenary Report

Appendix E: Spirituality Section Report

Appendix F: Message Committee Report

F. Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT-USA)

Since the fall of 2001, church leaders from a wide spectrum of ecclesiastical traditions have been meeting to discuss and create a new kind of ecumenical organization that includes participants from all traditions at the same table: Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT-USA). Previously, evangelicals have only met with other evangelicals, mainline leaders have only met with other mainline leaders, and the Roman Catholic leadership has not been part of any of the ecumenical organizations. In November 2004, the Catholic Conference of Bishops in the USA decided to join CCT-USA.

Synod 2004 authorized the IRC to participate in this new ecumenical organization. Dr. David Engelhard, the representative for the CRCNA, has participated in the discussions of the CCT-USA since the beginning of the

organization. The IRC will continue to monitor our involvement, provide reports to synod, and prepare a review of our relationship with the CCT-USA for the synod of 2010.

IV. Bilateral relationships-international

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN/GKN)/Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)

The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) have been integrally linked as churches since the 1890s when the GKN were formed. Intellectual, spiritual, and financial assistance flowed freely from the Netherlands to North America. Members felt at home in each other's churches. Sometimes the relationship has been referred to as "mother-daughter" and other times as "sister churches." This highlights the family connectedness that has existed in our relationship.

In the 1970s, the relationship between our churches experienced some strains and tensions. At first, the tensions were related to hermeneutics when the GKN gave endorsement to the document *God met Ons*. Later, the tensions increased when the GKN permitted gays and lesbians living in committed relationships to serve as officebearers in their churches. The provisions of "ecclesiastical fellowship" were gradually reduced from six (full relationship) to two (partial relationship).

The most recent restriction of the relationship occurred at the synod of 1996 (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520), and, at the same synod, the Interchurch Relations Committee was mandated to intensify discussions with the GKN regarding issues that have troubled our relationship (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 707 and *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520). The results of the intensified discussions were reported to the synods of 1998, 1999, and 2000.

The issues identified as those troubling our relationship are: (1) Scripture and hermeneutics, (2) homosexuality, (3) mission to the Jews, (4) euthanasia, and (5) Christology and the Atonement. Each of these matters was discussed at some length with representatives of the GKN over the years. Reports on the conversations as well as some analysis of the GKN positions can be found in the following places:

Agenda for Synod 1995, pp. 225-44

Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 393-410

Acts of Synod 1997, p. 526

Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 300-307

Agenda for Synod 2000, pp. 203-11

Agenda for Synod 2001, pp. 220-21

These reports identify where the GKN has altered its position in a corrective way in recent years (e.g., their view of Scripture and hermeneutics), where they have retained their view in spite of CRC objections (e.g., their view of homosexuality), and where they have addressed new concerns consistent with biblical and confessional teaching (e.g., Christology and the Atonement).

A significant factor affecting the GKN/CRC relationship has been the unification and merger process (formerly known as *Samen op Weg* / Together on the Way) that has taken place among the GKN, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK), and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk (ELK). The CRC

has had a relationship with only one of the three denominations in the merger, and even though we were somewhat familiar with the other two denominations, they had not been included in our ecumenical relationships. This merger was finalized in May 2004, and the three synods have agreed on a name for the new church: Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). Thus, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland / Reformed Churches in the Netherlands no longer exist in the form that we have known them. Ecclesiastical fellowship exclusively with one of the parties to the merger is prohibited by the new church's church order (Bylaw 14, Art. 4, pt. 1). Any relationship with these churches will need to be a relationship with the whole Protestant Church in the Netherlands and not just with the GKN.

While merger talks were taking place in the Netherlands, Synod 2001 instructed the IRC to do the following in its report to Synod 2003:

- a. To recommend restoration of full ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCN / GKN and the grounds for such restoration; or
- b. To provide synod with the reasons why full restoration of ecclesiastical fellowship would not be appropriate at this time.

(Acts of Synod 2001, p. 514)

Two years later, synod adopted the following recommendation from the IRC:

That synod declare that the current restricted relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN be retained until the new Protestant Church of the Netherlands has formally begun and the IRC has had time to assess what relationship is appropriate for the CRC to maintain with the new denomination.

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 603)

Against this background, in the fall of 2003 the IRC appointed a subcommittee consisting of Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and Rev. Richard Vander Vaart to prepare a report and recommendations regarding the CRC's ongoing relationship with the PCN. The subcommittee visited the Netherlands in May 2004 when the first synod of the PCN was held. They also held discussions with the church's leadership about our future relationship. (See a follow-up letter from the PCN in Appendix G.)

The discussions of the Interchurch Relations Committee concerning our relationship with the PCN were helpfully informed by alternative recommendations from the subcommittee. The IRC understands that some arguments could be made that synod should consider dissolving our bilateral relationship with the PCN. Continuing tolerance of homosexual practice in the PCN is, in the judgment of the CRC, contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of Synod 1973. In the meeting between representatives of the CRC (IRC subcommittee) and the PCN in May 2004, the PCN delegation made it clear that this issue is not currently being rethought in the PCN. The PCN's unwillingness to enter into any further discussion on this important matter continues to be significant disappointment to a relationship of mutual accountability.

The Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), a conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, has repeatedly expressed the desire that we continue our ecclesiastical fellowship. Although our continuing relationship may provide support and encouragement to the Gereformeerde Bond, it is not the practice of the CRCNA to establish fellowship with a portion

of a denomination, but only with the denomination itself. It would be inappropriate for the CRCNA to offer support to only a portion of the newly formed denomination while opposing the rest of the denomination. The CRCNA also would surely resist another denomination's seeking to have fellowship only with a particular segment of our churches. We ought to be clear that any ecclesiastical relationship is fellowship with the PCN as a whole.

It should also be evident that, even if we were to dissolve our bilateral relationship with the PCN, the CRCNA could continue to relate multilaterally with the PCN in organizations such as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). WARC could provide a forum where our churches can continue to challenge one another through the conversation of our delegates and through the decisions of the organization.

Despite the expressed concerns respecting a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCN, the case for continuing our bilateral relationship with the PCN is substantial. The PCN has expressed a strong desire to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA and would be greatly distressed by a termination of the relationship. It would be particularly discouraging to the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance) if the CRCNA were to terminate our relationship with the PCN. The historical character of the CRC's relationship with the GKN, which is continued in the PCN, is not something that should be ended lightly. Once a relationship has been fractured, restoration at a later time is much more difficult than sustaining and nurturing a strained relationship.

Even though PCN affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Scriptures as the Word of God, and some PCN interpretations of Scriptures have been unsatisfactory to the CRC, the PCN does confess the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confession. The PCN's recent adoption of the REC's document "Hermeneutics and Ethics" is an encouraging sign.

As the PCN struggles to be a Reformed church in the context of a radically secular European environment, the IRC believes that the CRCNA has an ecumenical responsibility to the PCN. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we not abandon opportunities to continue to relate with the PCN when this church has expressed appreciation for the way in which the CRCNA has exercised its ecclesiastical fellowship and responsibility.

While the case for a continuing fellowship with the PCN is supported by substantial grounds, the relationship between the CRC and the PCN will likely remain strained in some areas (see also Appendix G, letter from the PCN to the IRC). In particular, PCN tolerance of homosexual practice, which the CRC judges to be contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of Synod 1973, suggest that continuing restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship be maintained.

The IRC is convinced that there are good reasons for maintaining our relationship with the PCN with continuing restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship. Consequently, the IRC recommends the following:

That synod maintain a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the newly formed Protestant Church of the Netherlands with continuing restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship.

Grounds:

1. The PCN confesses the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confession. Even though some of their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Scriptures as the Word of God and some of their interpretations have been unsatisfactory to the CRC, they have more recently adopted the REC's document entitled "Hermeneutics and Ethics."
2. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate to the whole church of Jesus Christ in whatever ways are prudent; it follows that the CRC should certainly not surrender its opportunities for interchurch fellowship with the PCN when such exchange is readily available.
3. The CRC has an ongoing ecumenical responsibility to the PCN particularly as they struggle to be a Reformed church in a radically secular European environment. This responsibility may not be abandoned as long as the CRC has opportunity to fulfill its ecumenical task with the PCN.
4. The PCN expresses its fervent desire to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC and would be distressed by our termination of fellowship. They continue to express appreciation for the way in which the CRC seeks to exercise its ecclesiastical fellowship and responsibility.
5. The PCN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of Synod 1973, and, therefore, the restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship should be maintained.
6. The historical character of the CRC's relationship to the GKN, which is continued in the PCN, has been vital to the life of the CRC and should not be terminated lightly.
7. The expressed wish of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), a conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, is that we continue our relationship with the PCN.
8. Repairing a fractured relationship at a later time is much more difficult than continuing to nurture a strained relationship.

V. Bilateral relationships-North America

A. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

The CRCNA maintains ecclesiastical fellowship with three churches in North America. They are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Fraternal delegates are exchanged with these churches on a regular basis. The CRCNA continues in ecclesiastical fellowship with the ARPC even though it is one of the member denominations of NAPARC that has voted to terminate our membership in NAPARC. The ARPC has told us that the NAPARC decision does not affect our bilateral relationship.

B. *Reformed Church in America (RCA)*

Synod 2002 instructed the Interchurch Relations Committee to engage in dialogue with the Commission on Christian Unity of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The mandate is as follows:

That synod instruct the IRC, in consultation with appropriate agencies of the CRCNA to engage in a dialogue with the Commission on Christian Unity of the RCA, to ascertain how our ministry and mission throughout the world might be strengthened by greater cooperation between our two denominations and report its findings to Synod 2005.

(Acts of Synod 2002, p. 498)

The RCA's Commission on Christian Unity was also given a mandate by its synod in 2002 that reads as follows:

To instruct the Commission on Christian unity to enter into dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), exploring ways of moving toward greater unity between the CRC and the RCA in their ministry and mission, beginning with a discussion of the orderly exchange of ministers, and to report to the 2003 General Synod; and further, to encourage the agencies of the RCA to continue to expand their cooperative efforts with their CRC counterparts.

The IRC appointed a subcommittee of the following to meet with representatives of the RCA: Dr. Philip DeJonge, Dr. David H. Engelhard, Ms. Teresa Renkema, Dr. David Rylaarsdam, Rev. Richard Vander Vaart, and Rev. Ralph Wigboldus.

The CRC and RCA delegations first met in December 2002. Three items were given priority for consideration: (1) the so-called orderly exchange of ministers from one denomination to the other, (2) a unified approach to dealing with the Belhar Confession as requested by The Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa, and (3) a concerted effort to find new ways to cooperate in ministry and among our congregations and classes.

Our discussions with representatives of the RCA have been guided by the following agreed upon items (as reported to Synod 2003):

1. Continue the dialogue by meeting more than once a year and by retaining as many of the same delegates as is practical and/or possible.
2. Determine the necessary next steps that will allow our denominations to move toward the exchange of pastors. This will include an examination of the process for an exchange of pastors and an examination of what is currently happening in union churches (what agreements they have in place).
3. Examine the Belhar Confession together because the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) has requested both the RCA and the CRC to study and adopt the Belhar. It may be possible for our denominations to formulate a united statement of agreement on it. That would be a powerful statement to the URCSA.
4. Articulate where we are already cooperating (compile a list as complete as possible) and identify further areas where cooperation is possible.
5. Explore the question about obstacles—historical and current, theological and confessional, stereotypes and/or cultures—that do, and may, hinder seamless ministry.
6. Maintain good communication, involvement of constituencies, and publicity that celebrates present evidences of unity.
7. Invite new-idea people and enthusiastic vision casters to our meetings for consultation.
8. Each denomination will name the participants for this dialogue. By consensus, there will be four RCA delegates, four CRC delegates, and each denomination will have a staff person or ecumenical officer. Participants chosen will

represent the diversities of our respective constituencies. Consultants from each church will be freely used.

9. Meetings will be held three to four times a year. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has invited us to use their building in Chicago. Grand Rapids may also be considered an alternate location periodically.

(Agenda for Synod 2003, pp. 236-37)

Since the last synod, representatives of the CRC and RCA met again on October 21, 2004, in Chicago. A draft document on the orderly exchange of clergy was amended and corrected. Although significant progress has been made and there is substantial agreement, at the time of the writing of this report, the revision on clergy exchange is not yet ready for recommendation to synod.

The RCA has made great strides toward a greater understanding and acceptance of the Belhar Confession. The CRC participants in the dialogue group encouraged the RCA to produce their study materials in a form that would allow for its use as a discussion guide in the CRC context. Because both denominations are member churches in WARC, at the October 21, 2004, meeting of the CRC/RCA dialogue group, participants also discussed the WARC document, "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth."

The heads of agencies of both the CRC and the RCA met in the CRC denominational building on December 13, 2004, in order to discuss greater cooperation in mission and ministry. Representatives of the CRC/RCA dialogue group in attendance at this meeting were Rev. Philip De Jonge from the CRC and Rev. David Baak from the RCA.

C. Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)

The IRC encouraged the Canadian subcommittee of the IRC to participate in bilateral conversations with the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC). The first meeting with the PCC took place on January 14, 2005, in Burlington, Ontario. This meeting included:

1. An exchange of documents such as the CRCNA Ecumenical Charter and the documents that guide the PCC's Ecumenical Relations Committee.
2. An exchange of contemporary confessional documents: "Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony" (CRC) and "Living Faith" (PCC)
3. An exchange of study reports on significant issues currently before the synod of the CRC and the General Assembly of the PCC. These include but are not limited to:
 - Same Sex Relationships/Homosexuality
 - Alternate Routes to Ministry
 - Pastoral Ministry to Homosexual Persons
4. An exchange of conversations among ecumenical committee members.

A second meeting between representatives of the IRC Canada and the PCC was scheduled for April 8, 2005. The exchange of observers at the synod of the CRCNA and the General Assembly of the PCC was on the agenda.

VI. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

A. Heidleberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist

According to the instructions of Synod 2004, the general secretary on behalf of synod has requested that each council and each classis review the reports and decisions relative to Q. and A. 80 and to submit their responses to the general secretary by July 1, 2005. The IRC will evaluate these responses together with the responses from other denominations and the Reformed Ecumenical Council in order to make appropriate recommendations concerning Q. and A. 80 to Synod 2006.

B. Catholic/Reformed Dialogue

Synod 2003 approved a recommendation authorizing the IRC to participate in an ongoing dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and four Reformed denominations in the United States. The topic of this dialogue is the sacramental understanding of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) and baptism.

The first meeting of the dialogue partners was held in Louisville, Kentucky, in September 2003. Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and Most Reverend Patrick Cooney, Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan, were selected as cochairs of the multiyear discussion. The CRC participants are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

A second meeting was held in Washington, D.C., in April 2004. In October 2004, the dialogue conversation was continued at the Prince Conference Center on Calvin College's campus with the CRC as host. The next round is scheduled for April 2005 in Chicago.

VII. Nominations for membership

Three members of the IRC are completing their first term and are eligible for a second three-year term. Rev. Michiel M. De Berdt has admirably served the IRC and denomination for two three-year terms. A slate of U.S. nominees for this position will be presented to synod by the IRC in its supplemental report.

The following names are submitted to Synod 2005 as nominees for a second term for IRC membership:

A. Canadian nominees

Position 1

Rev. Ralph Wigboldus (incumbent nominee) was graduated from the University of Guelph in 1988 with a BSc. in Human Biology. He received an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1999. Rev. Wigboldus is presently the pastor of the Second CRC in Sarnia, Ontario, and serves as the vice president of the Interchurch Relations Committee.

Position 2

Dr. Bertha Mook (incumbent nominee) is a member of the Calvin Christian Reformed Church of Ottawa, Ontario. She is a graduate of both Potchefstroom University of Higher Christian Education and the University of Ottawa where she received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. Since 1987, she has been professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Ottawa and actively involved in teaching, writing, clinical training, and research. She also holds a part-time private practice.

B. U.S. nominees

Position 1

Mr. Abe Vreeke, (incumbent nominee) was graduated from Calvin College in 1968 with a degree in secondary education. He moved to Lupwe, Nigeria, in 1968 where he spent the next sixteen years serving in a wide variety of teaching and administrative assignments. While on home service in the early 1980s, he earned a M.C.E. from Calvin Theological Seminary and then became the principal of the Community Christian School in Pease, Minnesota. In 1989, he became a training assistant for World Missions and was appointed Nigeria Field Director in 1992. In 2000, he returned to the United States and is currently serving as principal of Lafayette Christian School in Lafayette, Indiana. He and his wife are members of Sunrise Christian Reformed Church.

Position 2

A slate of nominees to replace Rev. Michiel De Berdt will be presented in the IRC supplementary report.

VIII. IRC Hospitality Committee

The IRC will appoint a hospitality committee for fraternal delegates and observers to Synod 2005 at its April meeting. This committee assists the synod in helping visitors from other denominations feel welcome among us.

IX. Representation at synod

Dr. Philip De Jonge (president) and Rev. Ralph Wigboldus (vice president) have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 2005. The IRC also requests that those members of The Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) subcommittee who are present at the time of synod be given the privilege of the floor when this matter is discussed.

XI. Recommendations

A. That Dr. Philip De Jonge (president) and Rev. Ralph Wigboldus (vice president), along with members of The Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) subcommittee, be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the IRC are being discussed.

B. That synod welcome as observers representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC).

C. That synod designate a time (15 minutes) during its sessions to receive greetings from Mr. Bruce Clemenger, chairman of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

D. That synod maintain a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the newly formed Protestant Church of the Netherlands with continuing restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship.

Grounds:

1. The PCN confesses the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confession. Even though some of their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Scriptures as the Word of God and some of their interpretations have been

unsatisfactory to the CRC, they have more recently adopted the REC's document entitled "Hermeneutics and Ethics."

2. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate to the whole church of Jesus Christ in whatever ways are prudent; it follows that the CRC should certainly not surrender its opportunities for interchurch fellowship with the PCN when such exchange is readily available.
 3. The CRC has an ongoing ecumenical responsibility to the PCN particularly as they struggle to be a Reformed church in a radically secular European environment. This responsibility may not be abandoned as long as the CRC has opportunity to fulfill its ecumenical task with the PCN.
 4. The PCN expresses its fervent desire to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC and would be distressed by our termination of fellowship. They continue to express appreciation for the way in which the CRC seeks to exercise its ecclesiastical fellowship and responsibility.
 5. The PCN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of Synod 1973, and therefore the restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship should be maintained.
 6. The historical character of the CRC's relationship to the GKN, which is continued in the PCN, has been vital to the life of the CRC and should not be terminated lightly.
 7. The expressed wish of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), a conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, is that we continue our relationship with the PCN.
 8. Repairing a fractured relationship at a later time is much more difficult than continuing to nurture a strained relationship.
- E. That synod, by way of the printed ballot, elect members for the IRC from the slate of nominees presented above and in the supplemental report.

Interchurch Relations Committee

Louisa Bruinsma

Michiel De Berdt

Philip De Jonge, president

David H. Engelhard (ex officio)

Bertha Mook

James Payton

Teresa Renkema

David M. Rylaarsdam

Carlos G. Tapanes

Richard T. Vander Vaart

Abraham J. Vreeke

Ralph S. Wigboldus, vice president

Simon Wolfert

Appendix A

For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility

For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility

PREAMBLE

Evangelical Christians in America face a historic opportunity. We make up fully one quarter of all voters in the most powerful nation in history. Never before has God given American evangelicals such an awesome opportunity to shape public policy in ways that could contribute to the well-being of the entire world. Disengagement is not an option. We must seek God's face for biblical faithfulness and abundant wisdom to rise to this unique challenge.

The special circumstances of this historic moment underline both the opportunity and the challenge.

- Although we have the privilege to help shape the actions of the world's lone superpower, only half of all evangelical Christians bother to vote.
- The presence and role of religion in public life is attacked more fiercely now than ever, making the bias of aggressive secularism the last acceptable prejudice in America.
- Since the atrocities of September 11, 2001, the spiritual and religious dimensions of global conflict have been sharpened.
- Secular media outlets have long acknowledged evangelical involvement in pro-life and family issues, but are taking belated notice of evangelicals' global involvement in activities such as disaster relief, refugee resettlement, and the fights against AIDS/HIV, human rights abuses, slavery, sexual trafficking, and prison rape.
- Some key American political leaders now conceive of their roles in moral terms. And they see themselves as stewards of the blessings of representative democracy, religious freedom, and human rights in a world where many nations are endangered by the forces of authoritarianism or radical secularism.

Evangelicals may not always agree about policy, but we realize that we have many callings and commitments in common: commitments to the protection and well-being of families and children, of the poor, the sick, the disabled, and the unborn, of the persecuted and oppressed, and of the rest of the created order. While these issues do not exhaust the concerns of good government, they provide the platform for evangelicals to engage in common action.

Despite our common commitments and this moment of opportunity, American evangelicals continue to be ambivalent about civic engagement.

In 1947, Carl F. H. Henry pricked our uneasy consciences and spurred us toward responsible social and political engagement. In the years since, the National Association of Evangelicals has routinely engaged our political leaders through its Office of Governmental Affairs and worked to educate member churches on current issues. In recent decades, a variety of evangelical political voices have emerged. Yet evangelicals have failed to engage with the breadth, depth, and consistency to which we are called.

Scholars and leaders have inspired us by drawing attention to historical exemplars of evangelical public responsibility from Wilberforce and the Booths in England to Edwards, Backus, Garnet, Finney, and Palmer in America. Our spiritual ancestors did not always agree on the specifics of governance and the best roads to social reform. Yet their passion and sacrifice inspire us to creative engagement, even when we cannot fully agree on policy prescriptions.

Against this historical background and in view of these common commitments, we offer the following principled framework for evangelical public engagement.

THE BASIS FOR CHRISTIAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We engage in public life because God created our first parents in his image and gave them dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:27-28). The responsibilities that emerge from that mandate are many, and in a modern society those responsibilities rightly flow to many different institutions, including governments, families, churches, schools, businesses, and labor unions. Just governance is part of our calling in creation.

We also engage in public life because Jesus is Lord over every area of life. Through him all things were created (Col. 1:16-17), and by him all things will be brought to fullness (Rom. 8:19-21). To restrict our stewardship to the private sphere would be to deny an important part of his dominion and to functionally abandon it to the Evil One. To restrict our political concerns to matters that touch only on the private and the domestic spheres is to deny the all-encompassing Lordship of Jesus (Rev. 19:16).

Following in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus announced the arrival of God's kingdom (God's "reign" or "rule") (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). This kingdom would be marked by justice, peace, forgiveness, restoration, and healing for all. Jesus' followers have come to understand the time between his first and second comings as a period of "already, but not yet," in which we experience many of the blessings of God's reign and see initial signs of restoration, while we continue to suffer many of the results of the Fall. We know that we must wait for God to bring about the fullness of the kingdom at Christ's return. But in this interim, the Lord calls the church to speak prophetically to society and work for the renewal and reform of its structures. The Lord also calls the church to practice the righteous deeds of the kingdom and point to the kingdom by the

wholeness and integrity of the church's common life. This example will require us to demonstrate God's love for all, by crossing racial, ethnic, economic, and national boundaries. It will also often involve following Jesus' example by suffering and living sacrificially for others.

As Christian citizens, we believe it is our calling to help government live up to its divine mandate to render justice (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). From the teachings of the Bible and our experience of salvation, we Christians bring a unique vision to our participation in the political order and a conviction that changed people and transformed communities are possible. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are compelled outward in service to God and neighbor.

Jesus calls us as his followers to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our goal in civic engagement is to bless our neighbors by making good laws. Because we have been called to do justice to our neighbors, we foster a free press, participate in open debate, vote, and hold public office. When Christians do justice, it speaks loudly about God. And it can show those who are not believers how the Christian vision can contribute to the common good and help alleviate the ills of society.

THE METHOD OF CHRISTIAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Every political judgment requires both a normative vision and factual analysis. The more carefully and precisely we Christians think about the complex details of both, the more clearly we will be able to explain our views to others and understand—and perhaps overcome—disagreements with others.

Every normative vision has some understanding of persons, creation, history, justice, life, family, and peace. As Christians committed to the full authority of Scripture, our normative vision must flow from the Bible and from the moral order that God has embedded in his creation.

Evangelical Christians seek in every area of life to submit to the authority of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). Nevertheless, many contemporary political decisions—whether about environmental science, HIV/AIDS, or international trade—deal with complex sociological or technological issues not discussed explicitly in the Bible. As Christians engaged in public policy, we must do detailed social, economic, historical, jurisprudential, and political analysis if we are to understand our society and wisely apply our normative vision to political questions. Only if we deepen our Christian vision and also study our contemporary world can we engage in politics faithfully and wisely.

From the Bible, experience, and social analysis, we learn that social problems arise and can be substantially corrected by both personal decisions and structural changes. On the one hand, personal sinful choices contribute significantly to destructive social problems (Prov. 6:9-11), and personal conversion through faith in Christ can transform broken

persons into wholesome, productive citizens. On the other hand, unjust systems also help create social problems (Amos 5:10-15; Isa. 10:1-2) and wise structural change (for example legislation to strengthen marriage or increase economic opportunity for all) can improve society. Thus Christian civic engagement must seek to transform both individuals and institutions. While individuals transformed by the gospel change surrounding society, social institutions also shape individuals. While good laws encourage good behavior, bad laws and systems foster destructive action. Lasting social change requires both personal conversion and institutional renewal and reform.

The Bible makes it clear that God cares a great deal about the well-being of marriage, the family, the sanctity of human life, justice for the poor, care for creation, peace, freedom, and racial justice. While individual persons and organizations are at times called by God to concentrate on one or two issues, faithful evangelical civic engagement must champion a biblically balanced agenda.

Humility and civility

As sinners who are thankful for God's grace, we know that we do not always live up to our civic responsibility. Christians must approach political engagement with humility and with earnest prayer for divine guidance and wisdom. Because power structures are often entrenched, perfect solutions are unobtainable. Because cultural changes produce problems that are often not amenable to legislative solutions, we must not expect political activity to achieve more than it can. Because social systems are complex and our knowledge is incomplete, we cannot predict all the effects of laws, policies, and regulations. As a result, we must match our high ideals with careful social analysis and critical reflection on our experience in order to avoid supporting policies that produce unintended and unfortunate consequences.

We will differ with other Christians and with non-Christians over the best policies. Thus we must practice humility and cooperation to achieve modest and attainable goals for the good of society. We must take care to employ the language of civility and to avoid denigrating those with whom we disagree. Because political work requires persuasion and cooperation with those who do not share our Christian commitment, we must offer a reasoned and easy-to-grasp defense of our goals.

When we as Christians engage in political activity, we must maintain our integrity and keep our biblical values intact. While we may frequently settle for "half-a-loaf," we must never compromise principle by engaging in unethical behavior or endorsing or fostering sin. As we rightly engage in supporting legislation, candidates and political parties, we must be clear that biblical faith is vastly larger and richer than every limited, inevitably imperfect political agenda and that commitment to the Lordship of Christ and his one body far transcends all political commitments.

THE STRUCTURES OF PUBLIC LIFE

In the beginning, God called human beings to govern and to care for the creation. Faithfulness to this call has taken different forms as human beings have lived in family groups, in tribes and clans, in kingdoms and empires, and now in modern nation-states in an increasingly interconnected global community. Today we live in a complex society in which few people are directly involved in governing and in which complicated problems do not readily yield straightforward solutions.

God has ordered human society with various institutions and set in place forms of government to maintain public order, to restrain human evil, and to promote the common good. God has called all people to share responsibility for creating a healthy society. Human beings work out their different ways of obeying God's call as spouses, parents, workers, and participants in the wide variety of human networks. Some, however, are called to particular roles of governance. We must support and pray for all those who shoulder the burdens of government (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Representative democracy

We thank God for the blessings of representative democracy, which allow all citizens to participate in government by electing their representatives, helping to set the priorities for government, and by sharing publicly the insights derived from their experience. We are grateful that we live in a society in which citizens can hold government responsible for fulfilling its responsibilities to God and abiding by the norms of justice.

We support the democratic process in part because people continue to be sufficiently blessed by God's common grace that they can seek not only their own betterment, but also the welfare of others. We also support democracy because we know that since the Fall, people often abuse power for selfish purposes. As Lord Acton noted, power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Thus we thank God for a constitutional system that decentralizes power through the separation of powers, fair elections, limited terms of office, and division among national, state, and local authorities.

As Christians we confess that our primary allegiance is to Christ, his kingdom, and Christ's worldwide body of believers, not to any nation. God has blessed America with bounty and with strength, but unless these blessings are used for the good of all, they will turn to our destruction. As Christian citizens of the United States, we must keep our eyes open to the potentially self-destructive tendencies of our society and our government. We must also balance our natural affection for our country with a love for people of all nations and an active desire to see them prosper. We invite Christians outside the United States to aid us in broadening our perspectives on American life and action.

Just government and fundamental liberty

God is the source of all true law and genuine liberty. He both legitimates and limits the state's authority. Thus, while we owe Caesar his due (Matt. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26), we regard only Jesus as Lord. As King of Kings, Jesus' authority extends over Caesar. As followers of Jesus, we obey government authorities when they act in accord with God's justice and his laws (Titus 3:1). But we also resist government

when it exercises its power in an unjust manner (Acts 5:27-32) or tries to dominate other institutions in society. A good government preserves the God-ordained responsibilities of society's other institutions, such as churches, other faith-centered organizations, schools, families, labor unions, and businesses.

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

We work to protect religious freedom and liberty of conscience

God has ordained the two co-existing institutions of church and state as distinct and independent of each other with each having its own areas of responsibility (Rom. 13:1-7; Mark 12:13-17; Eph. 4:15-16, 5:23-32). We affirm the principles of religious freedom and liberty of conscience, which are both historically and logically at the foundation of the American experiment. They are properly called the First Freedom and are now vested in the First Amendment. The First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech, association, and religion provide the political space in which we can carry out our differing responsibilities. Because human beings are responsible to God, these guarantees are crucial to the exercise of their God-given freedom. As God allows the wheat and tares to grow together until the harvest, and as God sends the rain on the just and on the unjust, so those who obey and those who disobey God coexist in society and share in its blessings (Matt. 5:45, 13:24-30). This "gospel pluralism" is foundational to the religious liberty of all.

Participating in the public square does not require people to put aside their beliefs or suspend the practice of their religion. All persons should have equal access to public forums, regardless of the religious content or viewpoint of their speech. Likewise, judicial standards should protect and respect not only religiously compelled practices, but also religiously motivated behavior.

The First Amendment's Establishment Clause is directed only at government and restrains its power. Thus, for example, the clause was never intended to shield individuals from exposure to the religious views of nongovernmental speakers. Exemptions from regulations or tax burdens do not violate the Establishment Clause, for government does not establish religion by leaving it alone. When government assists nongovernmental organizations as part of an evenhanded educational, social service, or health care program, religious organizations receiving such aid do not become "state actors" with constitutional duties. Courts should respect church autonomy in matters relating to doctrine, polity, the application of its governing documents, church discipline, clergy and staff employment practices, and other matters within the province of the church (Acts 18:12-17).

Religion is not just an individual matter, but also refers to rich communal traditions of ultimate belief and practice. We resist the definition of religion becoming either radically individualized or flattened out to mean anything that passes for a serious conviction. Thus, while the First Amendment protects religiously informed conscience, it does not protect all matters of sincere concern.

We work to nurture family life and protect children

From Genesis onward, the Bible tells us that the family is central to God's vision for human society. God has revealed himself to us in the language of family, adopting us as his children (Rom. 8:23, Gal. 4:5) and teaching us by the Holy Spirit to call him *Abba Father* (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6). Marriage, which is a lifetime relationship between one man and one woman, is the predominant biblical icon of God's relationship with his people (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:20, 31:32; Ezek. 16:32; Eph. 5:23, 31-32). In turn, family life reveals something to us about God, as human families mirror, however faintly, the inner life of the Trinity.

The mutuality and service of family life contrast strongly with the hypermodern emphasis on individual freedom and rights. Marriage, sexuality, and family life are fundamental to society. Whether we are married or single, it is in the family that we learn mutual responsibility, we learn to live in an ordered society with complementary and distinct roles, we learn to submit and to obey, we learn to love and to trust, we learn both justice and mercy, and we learn to deny ourselves for the well-being of others. Thus the family is at the heart of the organic functioning of society.

Government does not have the primary responsibility for guaranteeing wholesome family life. That is the job of families themselves and of other institutions, especially churches. But governments should understand that people are more than autonomous individuals; they live in families and many are married. While providing individuals with ways to remedy or escape abusive relationships, governments should promote laws and policies that strengthen the well-being of families.

Many social evils—such as alcohol, drug, gambling, or credit-card abuse, pornography, sexual libertinism, spousal or child sexual abuse, easy divorce, abortion on demand—represent the abandonment of responsibility or the violation of trust by family members, and they seriously impair the ability of family members to function in society. These evils must be viewed not only as matters of individual sin and dysfunction, but also as violations of family integrity. Because the family is so important to society, violations of its integrity threaten public order. Similarly, employment, labor, housing, health care, and educational policies concern not only individuals but seriously affect families. In order to strengthen the family, we must promote biblical moral principles, responsible personal choices, and good public policies on marriage and divorce law, shelter, food, health care, education, and a family wage (Jas. 5:1-6).

Good family life is so important to healthy human functioning that we oppose government efforts to trespass on its territory: whether by encroaching on parental responsibilities to educate their children, by treating other kinds of households as the family's social and legal equivalent, or by creating economic disincentives to marriage.

We commit ourselves to work for laws that protect and foster family life, and against government attempts to interfere with the integrity of the family. We also oppose

innovations such as same-sex “marriage.” We will work for measures that strengthen the economic viability of marriages and families, especially among the poor. We likewise commit ourselves to work within the church and society to strengthen marriages, to reduce the rate of divorce, and to prepare young adults for healthy family life.

We work to protect the sanctity of human life and to safeguard its nature

Because God created human beings in his image, all people share in the divine dignity. And because the Bible reveals God’s calling and care of persons before they are born, the preborn share in this dignity (Ps. 139:13).

We believe that abortion, euthanasia, and unethical human experimentation violate the God-given dignity of human beings. As these practices gain social approval and become legitimized in law, they undermine the legal and cultural protections that our society has provided for vulnerable persons. Human dignity is indivisible. A threat to the aged, to the very young, to the unborn, to those with disabilities, or to those with genetic diseases is a threat to all.

The book of Genesis portrays human attempts to transcend creaturely humility before God as rebellion against God. Christians must witness in the political sphere to the limits of our creatureliness and warn against the dangers of dissatisfaction with human limits.

As many others in the West, we have had such faith in science and its doctrine of progress that we are unprepared for the choices biotechnology now brings us. We urge evangelicals with specialized scientific knowledge to help Christians and policymakers to think through these issues. As technologies related to cloning and creating inheritable genetic modifications are being refined, society is less able to create a consensus on what is good and what limits we should place on human modification. The uniqueness of human nature is at stake.

Where the negative implications of biotechnology are unknown, government ought to err on the side of caution. Christians must welcome and support medical research that uses stem cells from adult donors and other ethical avenues of research. But we must work toward complete bans on human cloning and embryonic stem-cell research, as well as for laws against discrimination based on genetic information.

We seek justice and compassion for the poor and vulnerable

Jesus summed up God’s law by commanding us to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:35-40). By deed and parable, he taught us that anyone in need is our neighbor (Luke 10:29-37). Because all people are created in the image of God, we owe each other help in time of need.

God identifies with the poor (Ps. 146:5-9), and says that those who “are kind to the poor lend to the Lord” (Prov. 19:17), while those who oppress the poor “show contempt for their Maker” (Prov. 14:31). Jesus said that those who do not care for the needy and the imprisoned will depart eternally from the living God (Matt. 25:31-46). The vulnerable

may include not only the poor, but women, children, the aged, persons with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, minorities, the persecuted, and prisoners. God measures societies by how they treat the people at the bottom.

God's prophets call his people to create just and righteous societies (Isa. 10:1-4, 58:3-12; Jer. 5:26-29, 22:13-19; Amos 2:6-7; Amos 4:1-3, 5:10-15). The prophetic teaching insists on both a fair legal system (which does not favor either the rich or the poor) and a fair economic system (which does not tolerate perpetual poverty). Though the Bible does not call for economic equality, it condemns gross disparities in opportunity and outcome that cause suffering and perpetuate poverty, and it calls us to work toward equality of opportunity. God wants every person and family to have access to productive resources so that if they act responsibly they can care for their economic needs and be dignified members of their community. Christians reach out to help others in various ways: through personal charity, effective faith-based ministries, and other nongovernmental associations, and by advocating for effective government programs and structural changes.

Economic justice includes both the mitigation of suffering and also the restoration of wholeness. Wholeness includes full participation in the life of the community. Health care, nutrition, and education are important ingredients in helping people transcend the stigma and agony of poverty and re-enter community. Since healthy family systems are important for nurturing healthy individuals and overcoming poverty, public policy should encourage marriage and sexual abstinence outside marriage, while discouraging early onset of sexual activity, out-of-wedlock births, and easy divorce. Government should also hold fathers and mothers responsible for the maintenance of their families, enforcing where necessary the collection of child-support payments.

Restoring people to wholeness means that governmental social welfare must aim to provide opportunity and restore people to self-sufficiency. While basic standards of support must be put in place to provide for those who cannot care for their families and themselves, incentives and training in marketable skills must be part of any well-rounded program. We urge Christians who work in the political realm to shape wise laws pertaining to the creation of wealth, wages, education, taxation, immigration, health care, and social welfare that will protect those trapped in poverty and empower the poor to improve their circumstances.

We further believe that care for the vulnerable should extend beyond our national borders. American foreign policy and trade policies often have an impact on the poor. We should try to persuade our leaders to change patterns of trade that harm the poor and to make the reduction of global poverty a central concern of American foreign policy. We must support policies that encourage honesty in government, correct unfair socioeconomic structures, generously support effective programs that empower the poor, and foster economic development and prosperity. Christians should also encourage continued government support of international aid agencies, including those that are faith based.

Especially in the developing world, extreme poverty, lack of health care, the spread of HIV/AIDS, inadequate nutrition, unjust and unstable economies, slavery and sexual trafficking, the use of rape as a tool of terror and oppression, civil war, and government cronyism and graft create the conditions in which large populations become vulnerable. We support Christian agencies and American foreign policy that effectively correct these political problems and promote just, democratic structures.

We work to protect human rights

Because God created human beings in his image, we are endowed with rights and responsibilities. In order to carry out these responsibilities, human beings need the freedom to form associations, formulate and express beliefs, and act on conscientiously held commitments.

As recipients of God's gift of embodied life, people need food, nurture, shelter, and care. In order to fulfill their God-given tasks, all people have a right to private property. God's design for human existence also implies a right to marry, enjoy family life, and raise and educate children. While it is not the primary role of government to provide everything that humans need for their well-being, governments are obligated to ensure that people are not unjustly deprived of them and to strengthen families, schools, businesses, hospitals, social-service organizations, and other institutions so they can contribute to human welfare. At the same time, government must fulfill its responsibilities to provide for the general welfare and promote the common good.

Governments should be constitutionally obligated to protect basic human rights. Documents like the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights are attempts to articulate the kind of treatment that every person deserves from the government under which they live. Insofar as a person has a human right, that person should be able to appeal to an executive, legislative, or judicial authority to enforce or adjudicate that right. We believe that American foreign policy should reward those countries that respect human rights and should not reward (and prudently employ certain sanctions against) those countries that abuse or deny such rights. We urge the United States to increase its commitments to developing democracy and civil society in former colonial lands, Muslim nations, and countries emerging from Communism.

Because the Creator gave human beings liberty, we believe that religious liberty, including the right to change one's religion, is a foundational right that must be respected by governments (Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are closely related to religious liberty, and people must be free to express their vision for a just social order without fear of torture or other reprisal.

We also oppose the expansion of "rights talk" to encompass so-called rights such as "same-sex marriage" or "the right to die." Inappropriately expanded rights language has

begun to function as a trump card in American discourse that unfairly shuts down needed discussion.

America has a tragic history of mistreating Native Americans, the cruel practice of slavery, and the subsequent segregation and exploitation of the descendants of slaves. While the United States has achieved legal and social equality in principle, the legacy of racism still makes many African Americans, Hispanics, and other ethnic minorities particularly vulnerable to a variety of social ills. Our churches have a special responsibility to model good race relations (Rom. 10:12). To correct the lingering effects of our racist history, Christians should support well-conceived efforts that foster dignity and responsibility.

We seek peace and work to restrain violence

Jesus and the prophets looked forward to the time when God's reign would bring about just and peaceful societies in which people would enjoy the fruits of their labor without interference from foreign oppressors or unjust rulers. But from the beginning, Christians have recognized that God did not call them to bring in God's kingdom by force. While all Christians have agreed that governments should protect and restore just and peaceful social orders, we have long differed on when governments may use force and whether we may participate in government-authorized force to defend our homelands, rescue others from attack, or liberate other people from oppression.

The peaceful settling of disputes is a gift of common grace. We urge governments to pursue thoroughly nonviolent paths to peace before resorting to military force. We believe that if governments are going to use military force, they must use it in the service of peace and not merely in their national interest. Military force must be guided by the classical just-war principles, which are designed to restrain violence by establishing the right conditions for and right conduct in fighting a war. In an age of nuclear and biological terrorism, such principles are more important than ever.

We urge followers of Jesus to engage in practical peacemaking locally, nationally, and internationally. As followers of Jesus, we should, in our civic capacity, work to reduce conflict by promoting international understanding and engaging in non-violent conflict resolution.

We labor to protect God's creation

As we embrace our responsibility to care for God's earth, we reaffirm the important truth that we worship only the Creator and not the creation. God gave the care of his earth and its species to our first parents. That responsibility has passed into our hands. We affirm that God-given dominion is a sacred responsibility to steward the earth and not a license to abuse the creation of which we are a part. We are not the owners of creation, but its stewards, summoned by God to "watch over and care for it" (Gen. 2:15). This implies the principle of sustainability: our uses of the Earth must be designed to conserve and renew the Earth rather than to deplete or destroy it.

The Bible teaches us that God is not only redeeming his people, but is also restoring the whole creation (Rom. 8:18-23). Just as we show our love for the Savior by reaching out to the lost, we believe that we show our love for the Creator by caring for his creation.

Because clean air, pure water, and adequate resources are crucial to public health and civic order, government has an obligation to protect its citizens from the effects of environmental degradation. This involves both the urgent need to relieve human suffering caused by bad environmental practice. Because natural systems are extremely complex, human actions can have unexpected side effects. We must therefore approach our stewardship of creation with humility and caution.

Human beings have responsibility for creation in a variety of ways. We urge Christians to shape their personal lives in creation-friendly ways: practicing effective recycling, conserving resources, and experiencing the joy of contact with nature. We urge government to encourage fuel efficiency, reduce pollution, encourage sustainable use of natural resources, and provide for the proper care of wildlife and their natural habitats.

OUR COMMITMENT

We commit ourselves to support Christians who engage in political and social action in a manner consistent with biblical teachings. We call on Christian leaders in public office or with expertise in public policy and political life, to help us deepen our perspective on public policy and political life so that we might better fulfill our civic responsibility.

We call on all Christians to become informed and then to vote, as well as to regularly communicate biblical values to their government representatives. We urge all Christians to take their civic responsibility seriously even when they are not fulltime political activists so that they might more adequately call those in government to their task. We also encourage our children to consider vocations in public service.

We call churches and transdenominational agencies to cultivate an understanding of civic responsibility and public justice among their members. Seminaries and Christian colleges have a special responsibility to imbue future leaders with a sense of civic responsibility. We call all Christians to a renewed political engagement that aims to protect the vulnerable and poor, to guard the sanctity of human life, to further racial reconciliation and justice, to renew the family, to care for creation, and to promote justice, freedom, and peace for all.

Above all, we commit ourselves to regular prayer for those who govern, that God may prosper their efforts to nurture life, justice, freedom, and peace.

Appendix B

World Alliance of Reformed Churches Twenty-fourth General Council, Accra, Ghana—July 30 - August 12, 2004

Theme: That All May Have Life in Fullness

Note: Much of this report has been enhanced by or taken from the extensive report of the General Council meeting written by Rev. Dr. John Thomas of the United Church of Christ.

The Twenty-fourth General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches was held on the campus of the University of Ghana in a suburb of Accra, Ghana. Ghana sits on the southern coast of West Africa east of the Ivory Coast, west of Togo, and south of Burkina Faso. It was once the center of the impressive Asanti kingdom with its capital of Kumasi north of Accra. The colonial period began at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, and then the English who established the Gold Coast Colony, a history, like much of West Africa, intertwined with the Atlantic slave trade. During the 1950s, Ghana won its independence under the leadership of the famous Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkruma. The forty-five years since have been marked by considerable political and economic instability, though hope is found in the reestablishment of multiparty rule a few years ago, the prospect of democratic elections in the next two years, and signs of economic growth.

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches is a family of churches, each tracing its roots to the Reformation and the Calvinist churches of the Dutch, Swiss, French, German, Hungarian, Czech, and English Presbyterian and Congregational traditions. Today there are some seventy-five million Reformed Christians worldwide. Once a predominantly northern body, the Alliance today is dominated by the churches of the south reflecting the growth of the churches established by the missionary efforts of the nineteenth century, a fact also reflected in the allotment of delegates to this meeting:

- One hundred delegates from fifty churches in Africa
- One hundred delegates from eighty churches in Asia
- Fifteen delegates from five churches in the Caribbean
- Thirty from fifteen churches in South America
- Twenty-five from eleven churches in the Pacific
- Six from four churches in the Middle East
- Sixty from twenty churches in Europe
- Thirty-five from ten churches in North America

Joining these nearly four hundred delegates were visitors, primarily from the United States and Europe, students from seminaries around the world attending a Global Institute of Theology held concurrently with the General Council, ecumenical representatives from groups such as the Reformed Ecumenical Council, the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and a large corps of youth Stewards, mostly in their twenties, who assisted with the logistics of the meeting while engaging in a unique international leadership development opportunity.

The Alliance is based in Geneva and carries out a variety of programs including cooperative mission and service, promoting the leadership of women, ecumenical theological dialogue, public witness on behalf of the member churches, fostering unity among the various churches, and inspiring the ecumenical vision among youth. A small staff in Geneva coordinates the work under the direction of the General Secretary, Dr. Setri Nyomi, himself a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The General Council meets approximately every seven years to elect officers, review past work, and to prioritize future initiatives, as well as to speak to the member churches on issues of importance to their own mission. In addition, the meetings foster relationships among church leaders and provide encouragement to those in particularly challenging contexts. One of the more important, though less tangible gifts of this kind of meeting, like many ecumenical gatherings, is the broadening experience it offers delegates who are both enriched and challenged by the faith, life, and witness of people and churches from contexts very different from their own.

Accra, the site of the meeting, is the capital of Ghana and its largest urban center. Located on the coast, it is a sprawling city growing rapidly from the influx of people from rural areas to Accra seeking employment. First impressions of Accra are of a city overburdened with traffic and unacquainted with urban planning. A center of sorts is located around Kwame Nkruma park, a memorial to the independence leader, but government and commercial buildings are widely scattered and there is little in the way of grand public space or public architecture. Some attempts are being made to alleviate traffic congestion, replacing traffic circles with underpasses and widening major arteries, but, for the most part, the city is choked with vehicles, and the air quality reflects that as well. The economic woes of the past decades are evident in the relative lack of new construction, and frequently one sees half-completed projects stalled, apparently for lack of funds. Most people have some proficiency in English, a legacy of the colonial period and of the need for a common language in a country with multiple indigenous languages. The currency is the Cedi, which replaced the English pound at the time of independence. At an exchange rate of nearly 9,000 Cedi to one U.S. dollar, one walks around with what feels like an alarmingly large amount of money! Prices—relative to American incomes—are low, \$2.25 for a typical taxi ride, \$5 for a book at the University book shop, or \$7 for a nice meal at a hotel.

A striking feature of the city is the commerce taking place alongside and in the middle of the roads where people move among the dense traffic selling almost every imaginable product: fresh water, fruit, snacks, newspapers, toys, watches, radios, cell phones, soccer balls, souvenirs, maps, sunglasses, bulk bags of toilet paper, windshield wipers, and steering wheel covers, even irons and ironing boards! Roadside markets sell traditional Ghanaian crafts, furniture, and countless other products. It seems that in Accra, you don't go to the stores, the stores come to you.

Most of the days of the General Council followed a similar pattern: Morning worship at 8 a.m. followed by Bible study, then tea, a late morning plenary session (plenaries were held at the Graduate School of Management and Public Affairs—GEMPA—located about a mile from the campus), lunch together under tents, an early afternoon plenary, afternoon tea, a late afternoon plenary, and dinner back at the university in various campus dining halls. The

middle days of the meeting were given over to committee and section work. Some evenings included regional meetings (North America, Africa, Europe, and so forth) and, on occasion, cultural presentations. Every night an arts and crafts market was open on the campus selling jewelry, fabric, clothing, wood carving, musical instruments, and other traditional Ghanaian arts. It provided a festive center for meeting friends.

Worship was central to the life of the General Council and was enriched by the particular contribution of Ghanaian musicians and the inclusion of some distinctive Ghanaian Presbyterian traditions. Daily morning worship was held in a large cafeteria on campus, transformed into a pleasant chapel space through the creative use of fabric, mobile art, and other symbols. An international planning committee developed each service around daily themes, but common to each service was the presence of a large “standing choir,” of fifty to one hundred choir members, drummers, and musicians from local churches, some of whom were contributing their annual holidays to be present. Walter Blege, a noted Ghanaian musicologist, coordinated the music and wrote the General Council hymn, based on a popular contemporary Ghanaian dance, which was sung throughout the days of the meeting. The language of worship was in the four working languages of the Council: French, English, German, and Spanish, and leadership was drawn extensively from the delegates and visitors. A multilingual hymnal—*Thuma Mina*—and worship booklets in the four languages enabled everyone to join in together regardless of the particular language being spoken or sung. The Ghanaian choirs have a majestic sound, enhanced by very dignified rhythmic movement. All the music is memorized, allowing great freedom of expression physically and musically. The accompaniment was electronic keyboard, drums, and various other kinds of percussion instruments. The repertoire of the choirs based on what we heard at daily worship and on Sundays in more “authentic” Ghanaian settings ranged from traditional western hymns sung in English, reflecting the missionary heritage, to more indigenous African songs sung in the three dominant languages of the Presbyterian churches. Some contemporary western “praise songs” are also finding their way into worship, hopefully not at the expense of the vibrant local music. The Ghanaian gospel songs were wonderful, but even the old Euro-American hymns took on a distinctive character with the accompaniment of drums.

We experienced Sunday worship twice, one in a mass service in downtown Accra, and once in local congregations. Independence Square was the setting for a huge outdoor service attended by the members of the General Council and by members of all of Accra’s area Presbyterian churches. Estimates ranged from ten thousand to fifteen thousand people all seated under tents in a Square that commemorated Ghanaian independence in 1957. Mass choirs provided the music, accompanied by drums and brass bands from local congregations. The service followed a traditional Reformed order; Setri Nyomi preached, and portions of the service, as is the local custom, were led in the local languages of Akan, Ga, and Ewe. Most of the women, and many men, wore colorful “uniforms” made of printed fabrics designating the particular church or choir they belonged to. A feature throughout the meetings was the special fabric commissioned for the General Council that was found everywhere on hosts and delegates alike. While men dominate the “up front” roles in worship, women provide the spiritual energy. Both at the Square, and a

week later at a local Presbyterian church, there were two very active celebratory parts of the service where the congregation leaves its seats and joins in singing and dancing. This goes on for some time and, while there must be an informal signal marking the beginning and the end, it felt very spontaneous. A distinctive feature of worship in the Presbyterian Churches of Ghana is the offering that is carried forward by the congregation in a joyous dance. There is no passive, somber passing of the plate; everyone joins a festive procession. One senses that this is the moment everyone is waiting for and there is no effort to rush things along. As was the case at the local Presbyterian church I attended, a typical practice is to have people come forward in groups according to the day of the week on which they were born. The day of one's birth is significant in many African cultures. It also provides for a kind of creative stewardship competition as the congregation waits after the service to hear which "day" contributed the most that Sunday!

Bible study took place in small groups under tents scattered across the soccer field outside the worship center. It was quite a sight to see groups of fifteen to twenty quietly conversing around the field, while huge local birds soared in the trees overhead. This relaxed hour was also the best time to get to know fellow delegates at a deeper level. We were assigned by language groups in a way that enabled all to participate but also to experience some of the diversity of the meeting. My group included participants from India, Sweden, Ghana, Australia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana. We were lead by a bishop from the Church of South India. Perspectives ranged from evangelical to feminist readings of the text and were illuminated by fascinating stories from our various contexts. Each day we focused on a passage from the book of Ruth. A rather heavy-handed, ideological commentary and set of study questions that had been prepared in advance were very idiosyncratic. Fortunately, they did not side track or trouble our vigorous discussions.

The work of the Council was divided among plenary sessions that focused on major themes presented by keynote speakers or panels, regional gatherings that provided opportunity for delegates from various churches within a geographic region to meet, issue groups that became forums for delegates to exchange views on specific topics of concern in church and world, sections (spirituality, mission, and covenanting for justice), and committees (policy and public issues). The policy committee, for which I served as reporter, reviewed the work of the Alliance over the last seven years and developed recommendations for the next period beyond 2004, recommendations that will of necessity be taken up by the new executive committee for prioritization. Limited time in committee and plenary discussion made it impossible to address with sufficient seriousness the very difficult issue of finances and the implications for the future, or for the critical need to rethink the relationship of WARC to other ecumenical bodies as well as the relationship of WARC's area councils to the Geneva secretariat. These are crucial questions, and it was surprising and disappointing, particularly for those of us responsible for dealing with these institutional concerns on behalf of our denominations, that the agenda allowed such limited time to examine them.

The public issues committee was divided into eight subcommittees with an absurd breadth of scope all the way from war, peace, and geopolitics; to gender justice; to interfaith issues; and to newly emerging bioethical concerns, any one of which could have been the focus for an entire meeting! There was

limited preparatory work done by staff or others on most of these issues and seemingly no formal, authorized system for bringing agenda items to the table, thus making the committees susceptible to the particular passions and prejudices of whoever happened to be present. This, in addition to the fact that the committee and its subgroups essentially had only a day and a half to work on their assignments, was a prescription for superficiality.

The work of the three sections (spirituality, mission, and covenanting for justice) moved in parallel with that of the committees, as if two meeting designs had been forced together into one. Thus, it was never quite clear how overlapping concerns were to be related. In retrospect, it would have been better to opt for one track or another, perhaps leading to discernment reflecting greater depth and care. The sections on mission and on spirituality did produce two fine reports that are thoughtful and theologically insightful. They deserve to be read and discussed widely. The section on covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth produced a very provocative report whose use will likely be much more problematic. In many ways, this was to have been the centerpiece of the General Council, culminating a process initiated by the General Council in Debrecen, Hungary in 1997, which called for a "process of confession" around the question of economic injustice. The theme of the Council, "I have come that they may have life in fullness," from the gospel of John reflected the concern for a witness that addresses the human condition as it is lived out particularly in the impoverished nations of the south. Looming large in the discussions were the issues of globalization, neoliberal economic policy, and the dark imperial shadow of the United States. A major hope for the Council was the production of a confession of faith in the mode of Barmen in Nazi Germany and, more recently Belhar in South Africa, that would place the church's witness to economic and environmental justice on a level with its articulation of the gospel, as well as concrete proposals for how the member churches can covenant together to address this injustice.

No one at the Council meeting denied the devastating reality of poverty and that certain oppressive structures contribute to it. Our host country of Ghana, while in relative terms better off than most of its neighbors, was ample evidence that "life in fullness" is denied to the vast majority in our world. From the beginning, however, it was clear that considerable disagreement existed about forms of economic analysis, including definition of terms; about the ecclesiastical nature or status of confessions; and about reception, that is, how a confession could be framed to invite the broadest use among the churches. A group of delegates and consultants, with clear ideological positions and conclusions apparently in hand, and who had been intimately involved in the various consultations since Debrecen, was given responsibility for leading the section and for drafting the report. This, in itself, made the process feel rather closed, and alternate voices, including those with considerable experience and expertise, had a hard time being heard or being taken seriously. A second group, primarily theologians from Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, arrived having done considerable preparatory work and with passionate views on some rather technical aspects of the issue, particularly whether we should be issuing a confession or perhaps a more modestly titled declaration. A third group, especially from the United States and Great Britain, attempted to pose concerns about how the language of a confession could be chosen so as to ensure that the people and institutions in their

contexts and congregations who often make global economic decisions for good or ill could be effectively engaged. The process for debate and discernment of the meeting never really allowed for these three groups to effectively hear one another as delegates talked past each other in what became an increasingly frustrating conversation between delegates and a drafting committee set on defending its agenda.

In the end, a confession was written, but it notes within the document that by confession we do “not mean a classical doctrinal confession” but “to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time” (section 15). The confession is fairly long and states its positions strongly; some may even say arrogantly. It is cluttered with ill-defined technical jargon and may well confuse and offend the typical member of our churches rather than engage what is admittedly a challenging and critical issue of faith and practice.

The trip that most delegates will remember as most memorable was the day trip (“pilgrimage” some called it) to the slave dungeons at Elmina and Cape Coast castles about a three-hour drive from Accra. I visited the Cape Coast castle that was built by the British in 1665, and became one of about fifty such structures along the west coast of Africa used for commercial trading, especially of slaves. The imposing castle is built against the sea with accommodations for the governor and the merchants, for soldiers, and below for the enslaved. The dungeons are hot, humid, dark places with minimal ventilation. Starvation and disease were rampant. The dungeons were connected by dark hallways to the “Door of No Return” through which the slaves would pass to boats that took them to larger ships anchored offshore. In 1998, the skeletons of two slaves, one from New York and one from Jamaica, were conveyed to Ghana by their family members and returned through the castle to be reburied on Ghana’s soil. They came through the door now known as the “Door of Return.”

While we were moved powerfully by Ghana’s past, we were embraced by Ghana’s present, particularly by the churches. With its small Geneva staff, WARC relied heavily on the two host churches, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, the two primary Protestant churches, and both members of the Alliance. They were started in different parts of the country by German missionaries in the nineteenth century; sent out by the Bremen and Basel Missions. Originally separated by geography, the two denominations are now spread side by side throughout the country. One major distinction between the two denominations is the language used in worship, but there are many similarities and much cooperation. These two churches raised money, provided all our meals, sang in the choirs, managed the shuttle buses, provided liaison to the university and to local police and security authorities, hosted us at their churches and in their homes, and handled public relations. It was an immense undertaking, apparently taken on with great enthusiasm. Clearly they were proud of the way they were able to “welcome the world” and also of the fact that Setri Nyomi, the General Secretary of WARC, is one of their own.

Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, the stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA) was elected president of the Alliance. The challenges for Dr. Kirkpatrick, Dr. Nyomi, the new executive committee, and the staff will be significant in the coming months. Several of the current staff will be leaving the employ of WARC in the months following the Council. Finances are very

strained. The need to work out new relationships with partner ecumenical organizations, including the possibility of some consolidation, is clear, but the way forward is not obvious. Somehow the commitments around economic justice, for all the problems of process and final product, will need to be translated into the lives of the churches. Most of these critical questions were deferred for another time. All of this is, of course, set against the backdrop of a very troubled world: Christian churches were bombed in Baghdad during our meeting; the crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan deepened; and delegates from the Middle East, Pakistan, Indonesia, Taiwan, and South Korea shared reports of conflict and ominous tensions.

One wonders sometimes whether a meeting like this is anything more than a temporary distraction from the enormous challenges faced by the churches and the communities and countries where they minister. It might be easy to become cynical, particularly following a meeting marked by many difficulties and frustrations. On the other hand, at a time when institutional preoccupations threaten to overwhelm many church leaders, one cherishes the opportunity to share even briefly in a vital community of worship where difference and diversity is both challenging and enriching. Most of us carry home many wonderful memories, a new sense of immediacy about the partnerships shared across the globe, the invitation to a more intimate solidarity with those who struggle in places very far from our own, deepened insights into some of the challenges others face and how their responses might inform our own, and a renewed imagination about the unity of the church. For churches in North America often caught up in the illusion of their self-sufficiency, the General Council brings one into contact with small churches for whom global ecumenical contact is not only cherished but critical. Such contacts certainly contribute to the fullness of life heralded in the theme of the Twenty-fourth General Council and promised in the gospel. The gift of contact with believers worldwide is cause for the celebration enacted and sung almost daily in our General Council hymn:

*I am the Bread of Life broken for all,
I give hope to all those who heed my call;
the hungry, the helpless, the sick and the weakest
shall find happiness at my feast in fullness blest.
Celebrate, celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!
Celebrate, celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!
I have come that all my have life
and have it in fullness.*

Appendix C

Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth

World Alliance of Reformed Churches
24th General Council, Accra, Ghana
July 30 – August 13 2004

DOCUMENT GC 23-e
ENGLISH

(As agreed by General Council)

Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth

Introduction

1. In response to the urgent call of the Southern African constituency which met in Kitwe in 1995 and in recognition of the increasing urgency of global economic injustice and ecological destruction, the 23rd General Council (Debrecen, Hungary, 1997) invited the member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into a process of “recognition, education, and confession (*processus confessionis*)”. The churches reflected on the text of Isaiah 58.6 “...break the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free,” as they heard the cries of brothers and sisters around the world and witnessed God’s gift of creation under threat.
2. Since then, nine member churches have committed themselves to a faith stance; some are in the process of covenanting; and others have studied the issues and come to a recognition of the depth of the crisis. Further, in partnership with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and regional ecumenical organizations, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has engaged in consultations in all regions of the world, from Seoul/Bangkok (1999) to Stony Point (2004). Additional consultations took place with churches from the South in Buenos Aires (2003) and with churches from South and North in London Colney (2004).
3. Gathered in Accra, Ghana, for the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we visited the slave dungeons of Elmina and Cape Coast where millions of Africans were commodified, sold and subjected to the horrors of repression and death. The cries of “never again” are put to the lie by the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global economic system.
4. Today we come to take a decision of faith commitment.

Reading the Signs of the Times

5. We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Romans 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.
6. The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.
7. We live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all. The annual income of the richest 1% is equal to that of the poorest 57%, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition. The debt of poor countries continues to increase despite paying back their original borrowing many times over. Resource-driven wars claim the lives of millions, while millions more die of preventable diseases. The HIV and AIDS global pandemic afflicts life in all parts of the world, affecting the poorest where generic drugs are not available. The majority of those in poverty are women and children and the number of people living in absolute poverty on less than one US dollar per day continues to increase.
8. The policy of unlimited growth among industrialized countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment. In 1989, one species disappeared each day, and by 2000 it was one every hour. Climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion, and threats to fresh water are among the devastating consequences. Communities are disrupted, livelihoods are lost, coastal regions and Pacific islands are threatened with inundation, and storms increase. High levels of radioactivity threaten health and ecology. Life forms and cultural knowledge are being patented for financial gain.

9. This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based on the following beliefs:
 - unrestrained competition, consumerism, and the unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is the best for the whole world;
 - the ownership of private property has no social obligation;
 - capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and national resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes, and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all;
 - social obligations, protection of the poor and the weak, trade unions, and relationships between people, are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.
10. This is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through the creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.
11. We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. In using the term “empire” we mean the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests.
12. In classical liberal economics, the state exists to protect private property and contracts in the competitive market. Through the struggles of the labour movement, states began to regulate markets and provide for the welfare of people. Since the 1980s, through the transnationalization of capital, neoliberalism has set out to dismantle the welfare functions of the state. Under neoliberalism the purpose of the economy is to increase profits and return for the owners of production and financial capital, while excluding the majority of the people and treating nature as a commodity.
13. As markets have become global, so have the political and legal institutions which protect them. The government of the United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization) use political, economic, or military alliances to protect and advance the interest of capital owners.
14. We see the dramatic convergence of the economic crisis with the integration of economic globalization and geopolitics backed by neoliberal ideology. This is a global system that defends and protects the interests of the powerful. It affects and captivates us all. Further, in biblical terms such a system of wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor is seen as unfaithful to God and responsible for preventable human suffering and is called Mammon. Jesus has told us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Lk 16.13).

Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction

15. Faith commitment may be expressed in various ways according to regional and theological traditions: as confession, as confessing together, as faith stance, as being faithful to the covenant of God. We choose confession, not meaning a classical doctrinal confession, because the World Alliance of Reformed Churches cannot make such a confession, but to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time and the call of Debreceen. We invite member churches to receive and respond to our common witness.
16. Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore we **confess** before God and one another.

17. **We believe** in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.
18. **We believe** that God is sovereign over all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24.1).
19. **Therefore, we reject** the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.
20. **We believe** that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the "least of these" (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos 2.18ff).
21. **Therefore we reject** the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system, or any other system, which claims there is no alternative.
22. **We believe** that any economy of the household of life, given to us by God's covenant to sustain life, is accountable to God. We believe the economy exists to serve the dignity and well being of people in community, within the bounds of the sustainability of creation. We believe that human beings are called to choose God over Mammon and that confessing our faith is an act of obedience.
23. **Therefore we reject** the unregulated accumulation of wealth and limitless growth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God's creation.
24. **We believe** that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation, and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged, and the abused (Psalm 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.
25. **Therefore we reject** any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation, and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all. We reject any teaching which justifies those who support, or fail to resist, such an ideology in the name of the gospel.
26. **We believe** that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God's way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, "so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24).
27. **Therefore we reject** any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature.
28. **We believe** that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (Jn 10.10). Jesus brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind (Lk 4.18); he supports and protects the downtrodden, the stranger, the orphans and the widows.

29. **Therefore we reject** any church practice or teaching which excludes the poor and care for creation, in its mission; giving comfort to those who come to “steal, kill and destroy” (Jn 10.10) rather than following the “Good Shepherd” who has come for life for all (Jn 10.11).
30. **We believe** that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible.
31. **Therefore we reject** any attempt in the life of the church to separate justice and unity.
32. **We believe** that we are called in the Spirit to account for the hope that is within us through Jesus Christ, and believe that justice shall prevail and peace shall reign.
33. **We commit ourselves** to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.
34. **We humbly confess** this hope, knowing that we, too, stand under the judgement of God’s justice.
 - We acknowledge the complicity and guilt of those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neoliberal economic global system; we recognize that this includes both churches and members of our own Reformed family and therefore we call for confession of sin.
 - We acknowledge that we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism, and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system. This has all too often permeated our very spirituality.
 - We confess our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature.
 - We confess our sin that our disunity within the Reformed family has impaired our ability to serve God’s mission in fullness.
35. **We believe**, in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.
36. **We join in praise** to God, Creator, Redeemer, Spirit, who has “brought down the mighty from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands” (Lk 1.52f).

Covenanting for Justice

37. By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God’s will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. This binds us together to work for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings.
38. On this common journey, some churches have already expressed their commitment in a confession of faith. We urge them to continue to translate this confession into concrete actions both regionally and locally. Other churches have already begun to engage in this process, including taking actions and we urge them to engage further, through education, confession and action. To those other churches, which are still in the process of recognition, we urge them on the basis of our mutual covenanting accountability, to deepen their education and move forward towards confession.
39. The General Council calls upon member churches, on the basis of this covenanting relationship, to undertake the difficult and prophetic task of interpreting this confession to their local congregations.
40. The General Council urges member churches to implement this confession by following up the Public Issues Committee’s recommendations on economic justice and ecological issues
41. The General Council commits the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to work together with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and

people's movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation and calls upon our member churches to do the same.

42. Now we proclaim with passion that we will commit ourselves, our time and our energy to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live (Deuteronomy 30.19).

Appendix D

Mission Section Plenary Report

WARC 24th General Council
Mission Section Plenary Report
Final Report

Mission is at the heart of our understanding of God and the church. As we have gathered in Accra for the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, sharing in the fullness of life (Jn 10:10) with sisters and brothers from churches all over the world, we have been mutually encouraged by each other's faith (Rom 1:12). Our commitment to mission has been strengthened in our fellowship together and through the stories of hope we have shared. In Accra, we have been challenged to rethink our understanding of mission; to reconsider the ways in which we participate in God's mission in our different cultures and contexts; to reflect upon new challenges for mission; and to strengthen our relationships with one another as we engage in mission.

The groaning of creation and the cries of the poor and the marginalized are calling us to conversion for and recommitment to mission. In this report, we wish to share with all our churches what we have learned in Accra and the implications of our sharing together for the future of our common witness to the gospel.

1. Mission in the Context of Globalization

1.1 Economic globalization challenges Christian mission and the integrity of the church. However, globalization is no longer an adequate term to describe the threat to life in fullness. As we look at the negative consequences of globalization for the most vulnerable and for the earth community as a whole, we have begun to rediscover the evangelical significance of the Biblical teaching about Empire. This is related to the Exodus, the Babylonian captivity and the Macedonian and Roman occupation of Palestine (Ex 3-12; Ps 137; Dan 2; Hos 7; Hab 5; Luke 13; Eph 3; Rev 12 -13). Today, we define Empire as the convergence of economic, political, cultural, and military interests that constitute a system of domination in which benefits are forced to flow from the weak to the powerful. Centered in the last remaining superpower yet spread all over the world, Empire crosses all boundaries, reconstructs identities, subverts cultures, overcomes nation states, and challenges religious communities.

1.2 Empire is reshaping the ways that churches relate to one another, globally and locally. In many countries in the world, churches and individual Christians are being attacked. Many of our sisters and brothers are suffering for their faith, and we are in solidarity with them. In some instances, they are suffering because of the seeming identification of globalization, Empire and Christian mission. We have seen irrefutable evidence that gross injustices have been committed in the name of Christian mission in Africa and other parts of the world. In different ways, these continue to be reproduced today. Our

recommitment to mission renewal must be accompanied by repentance and forgiveness for what we have done and what we have left undone, both today and in our earlier practices.

1.3 We need to draw a clear distinction between Christian mission and the forces of domination, patriarchy, racism and institutional injustice that are associated with Empire. This will involve a new Christian vision, rooted in apostolic faith, that stands for the fullness of life in a world of worsening poverty, environmental degradation, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, corruption, terrorism, and war.

1.4 In the stories of hope and our sharing of experiences with one another, we see glimpses of this vision (1 Cor 13:12). In many of our congregations, we hear inspiring stories of mission renewal through involvement and hospitality. We have experienced how global communications technologies have enhanced our relationships with one another. Our stories of suffering and hope, and our experiences of personal, social and ecclesial transformation in the living practice of God's mission to the world challenge the context of economic globalization and Empire.

2. *Mission in the Fullness of Life: Toward New Missiologies of Life*

2.1 Mission is embodied in the life of the people of God among all God's peoples, bearing witness to Jesus Christ in the life of the Holy Spirit. God's mission is plural and can no longer be expressed in any single missiology. Missiologies of life are Spirit-centered missiologies, expressed in stories and experiences drawn from our own contexts, in dialogue with the Word of God.

2.2 Missiologies of life are a continuation of the mission of Jesus in announcing God's reign (Lk 4:18) and proclaiming the gospel to all peoples. The God of the covenant with the earth community was in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was a prophet, who resisted Empire and domination of every kind; a priest who comforted those who were powerless and broken, impoverished and marginalized; a King who became a Servant who saw on the other side of Empire. Christ is at work today in establishing inclusive and open communities of renewal and hope among us. The mission of Jesus is our mission.

2.3 The mission of Jesus must include a continuing emphasis on evangelism and evangelization. Some of our churches have done far more in integrating evangelism and proclamation in their mission practices than others. We need to learn from each other in our efforts in evangelization, for we believe that the message of Jesus Christ is a message of salvation and hope, offered unconditionally to all peoples.

2.4 Continuing the mission of Jesus is related to a range of images centering on mission in the household of life (1 Pet 2:5). Households are everywhere and the flow of mission is everywhere. Mission as communion, partnership, hospitality, stewardship, mutuality, solidarity, accountability are all related to the image of household. Household focuses on the ecumenical mission of all in each place. Patriarchy imposes limitations upon women in the household, the church and the public sphere, and it limits the participation of youth. Mission in the fullness of life includes gender justice and the participation of youth and is available to all women and men.

2.5 Missiologies of life emphasize healing and wholeness in our divided and broken world. Healing brings the waters of life (Ez 47:9) and the promise of new life in Christ (1 Cor 15:22). New life means the healing of memories of injustices; deliverance from the powers that continue to enslave our peoples; healing in the Body of Christ afflicted with poverty, HIV and AIDS; reconciliation among churches; healing of our relationships with other religious traditions; and the healing of the earth community

3. *Mission in the Life of the Spirit: Engagement with Pentecost and Pentecostalism*

3.1 Pentecost is a gift and a calling of the whole church. We need to develop further what this means for theologies of the Spirit that can inspire new ways of doing mission in various contexts. We have heard many stories of the ways that Reformed spirituality resists evil; affirms life in fullness; and calls churches to mission renewal in local and global contexts.

3.2 Secularization, a complex and multifaceted trend, challenges our churches in many parts of the world. In Europe, secularization has been a political and cultural process, induced by the Enlightenment, a movement from a religious to a non-religious world of meaning, and a withdrawal of the church from the public sphere. In other parts of the world, secularization has represented a challenge brought on by modernity and globalization. The gift and calling of Pentecost challenges us to find new ways of doing mission in the face of such challenges.

3.3 The World Alliance of Reformed Churches is engaged in a dialogue with Pentecostals, the results of which we believe can be used by member churches in relationships in their own contexts. The growth, adaptability, spiritual exuberance and networking of Pentecostals (and Neo-Pentecostals) worldwide challenge our churches to new forms of engagement in mission. Dialogue with Pentecostals has also compelled us to reconsider the sources for spiritual renewal for mission in our traditions.

3.4 There is much we can learn from the Pentecostal movement. For example, their emphasis on the Holy Spirit in mission, participatory forms of worship, and lay leadership can all contribute to our own life of worship and mission.

3.5 At the same time, we must also discern the Spirit in different contexts, for some Pentecostal mission practices are problematic for our churches. For example, we have serious differences on such issues as proselytism, gender justice and teachings about a gospel of prosperity.

4. Engagement with Other Religious Communities

4.1 Religious communities are today facing divisions and contradictions between peoples and nations as globalization and Empire manipulate cultural, ethnic and political tensions for the powerful. In this situation, religious persecution and inter-religious conflict pose new challenges for churches and religious groups in many parts of the world.

4.2 Reformed churches have not developed an adequate approach to religious plurality, and yet our churches increasingly find themselves in multi-religious contexts demanding new responses. Mission and dialogue are both needed, but we also need new forms of inter-religious engagement to address issues of inter-religious conflict.

4.3 Christians are disciples of Jesus who are the people of God among all God's peoples. All over the world, Christians are living in the midst of people from other religious communities, and our churches must be engaged with them. In our encounter with people of other faiths, we witness to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, as we learn from and listen to others' unique religious teachings.

4.4 We need to develop processes of contextual discernment in relating to other religious communities. This involves interfaith listening and programs of sharing and exchange. In a world of globalization and Empire, we need interfaith solidarity in mission so we can work together on issues that affect us all. In our attempts to understand interfaith solidarity, theologies of life in fullness will complement more traditional theologies of salvation.

5. Toward a Fellowship of Reformed Churches Covenanting Together in Mission

5.1 We are called to proclaim the Good News in a time in which the historical challenges seem overwhelming to our churches. Our common calling moves us to pray and grow into fuller communion with one another, and the wider ecumenical family, in obedience to the God who calls us to be in mission.

5.2 We are called to be a fellowship of churches in mission. Whether we are churches in poor or in rich countries, we are required to ask ourselves whether our mission relations are fair and effective; whether they are unilateral or multilateral; whether they are captive to the powers of this world or sharing the power of love; whether they lead us to financial dependence or mutual inter-dependence, mutual vulnerability and mutual accountability.

5.3 We must confess that Reformed mission has often been an individualistic and entrepreneurial or bilateral effort lacking accountability. This has caused church division in many places. Mission means both self-emptying and empowerment in the sharing of resources (Phil 2; 2 Cor 8). We must move toward new ways of sharing, for mission is not to gain power, but to share the power of love. Sharing is expressed by such terms as solidarity, partnership, mutual dependence, inter-dependence, mutual vulnerability and accountability. New disciplines of mission that embody a practice of unity respecting the unique role of churches in each place are needed.

5.4 Mission means covenanting together. Our new missiologies must be reflected in the structural relationships we maintain with one another as churches. We therefore call on our churches to prayerfully consider and carefully discuss what it might mean to see the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as a fellowship of churches covenanting together in mission, developing in dialogue with one another new missiologies of life, and exploring together new patterns of sharing for our common calling. [end]

Appendix E

Spirituality Section Report

World Alliance of Reformed Churches
24th General Council, Accra, Ghana
July 30 – August 13 2004

DOCUMENT GC 18-e
ENGLISH

Spirituality Section Report Hearing the cry for life in our joy and our pain

"All of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit groan within ourselves, as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free" Romans 8.22-23.

"Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom? For all I ever have: Redemption Song"
Bob Marley Redemption Song



The 24th general council has been faced with a deeply spiritual as well as theological and missiological task: we are being confronted by the cry for life, God's cry for life within us and within our world and God's cry from those who live with poverty and injustice. This council gathering invites us to experience our unity in Christ, for our being in Christ together propels us into becoming his new creation, a community that walks the way of Christ enabled by his Spirit. Thus, the council has been considering the issues that our theme and our sharing pose to Christian spirituality. Spirituality is our chief means to discern and hallow the presence of God breaking out in all things, God's presence flowing into all aspects of our life and world. The spirituality section has explored spirituality as the gift that gives us the capacity to struggle, celebrate and feel for others in the midst of everything we face. The deeper our spirituality the deeper our capacity to face and overcome that which is unjust, celebrate the life we have, and feel for our neighbours near and far.

We have all said how much the experience of African spirituality has revealed to us a holistic and engaged spirituality. We have experienced a creative and deep sense of God's Spirit at work in all of life and have felt this Spirit leading us to life in fullness. This indwelling Spirit transforms and sanctifies us inwardly and outwardly. The Spirit speaks with a prophetic voice that often we stifle through the many concerns of our lives and even stifle through the shallowness of our worship.

We found ourselves wondering: "Are we really providing people with the deep resources they need to live their lives and to live their lives fully in the light of God's promise?" In the section, varying and conflicting stories were told of people who felt lifted up by the church and others who felt cast down. We heard stories of those who, during time of war in their country, found something inspiring and strengthening. We heard stories of those who were living with pain and loss and were held up and empowered by the church. We also heard stories of those confronted and excluded by mean-spirited attitudes and an unwillingness to be open to people. We are very clear how our practice of spirituality can enable healing of our personal and political hurt, soothe our memories, and enable us to move on. But we see how it can also witness to a separation of worship from life and a flattering of our egos rather than a deep engagement with the will of God for our world and lives.

We look, then, in many directions for inspiration in our spiritual life and expression. We look to the stories of our contemporaries and the stories of our time, to all the creative arts and traditions of our cultures. But especially we look to the deepest well of spirituality, the Scriptures themselves and to Christ himself whose life and love is the summation of life in fullness and the inspiration to live and struggle for it. So this is a summary of some of the implications spirituality has for our task as Reformed churches.

Key issues in our theological task

It seems that we have not sufficiently developed and honoured our understandings of the action of the Holy Spirit in the challenges of our day. We have not fully grasped and expressed what life in the Spirit looks like. It seems to us that it looks like life in fullness: life that is lived generously for others, life that sees itself

connected to the whole of our created and political order. Our discussion of spirituality revealed that we have often failed to see spirituality as wider than worship. We affirmed spirituality as flowing from all of life and connecting us to the Holy Spirit, but we are not all able to practise this understanding because we have not been open to the world beyond worship. Section discussions admitted how our theology has emphasized the head over the heart, the mind over the body; this is a theology growing increasingly stale in the diverse cultures and environments we inhabit. Our discussions ranged widely as to the nature of spirituality, but always it was difficult to leave worship as the fundamental expression of our spirituality. Yet so many of us spend so little time in worship, and the worship we engage in often fails to address the issues of our day, nor does it engage us at any deep level. We are often not expressing ourselves, our faith, or our theology at a level that moves and compels us to the struggle for life in all its fullness.

Key issues in our missiological task

Covenanting for life

We are churches who want to engage with the struggle for justice and covenant for life. We are hearing such distressing stories and statistics about the nature of poverty and economic injustice that it threatens to overwhelm us. The burden of debt, the determined way rich nations and corporations run the world economy for their advantage points us to a long struggle before justice and fullness of life can prevail. How can we sustain this struggle if we do not develop the spiritual resources that keep us connected to the cry for life from our God and our neighbour? Otherwise we will simply give in to fatigue, cynicism, and fatalism. We could be missing Christ's invitation to a deep sense of communion with him and with our sisters and brothers, an invitation that is discovered in worship but practised in living and enabled by the Spirit.

We are churches who want to live more gently on the earth. The degradation of the planet's resources, ecosystem and habitat could be facing us with more profound changes than the earth has experienced in millions of years. We have allowed ourselves to plunder the earth unchecked, but our increasing sense of spiritual connection with our groaning creation pushes us more and more to consider how we might change our lifestyles and our economic policies. The sovereignty of God calls us to treat the world as sacred, yet we spurn God's sovereignty and the earth's sacredness by treating so much of life as simply a commodity. Spirituality reveals to us a deepening sense of the God who cares for all living things, a care we, too, are called to exercise and sustain. But we need still to practise this ecologically responsible discipleship and see it inviting us into deeper partnership with Christ and the many who share this concern with us.

Communicating the gospel

Churches planted during the period of colonial mission are still using models that reflect Europe and North America of that particular time. 19th century European models of worship have been imposed on all sorts of cultures. These cultures are not always sure how to renew themselves and lift the burden of this heritage. Even where churches in the South are discovering their own cultural voice, many churches in Europe and North America are left with a voice that no longer speaks to many of their contemporaries, if indeed it still speaks to them. This hampers us in our evangelistic and celebratory tasks as churches. We have shared in a rich variety of spiritual expression: music, drama, prayer, images, word and silence. All need to take their place in our life of witness, worship, and biblical reflection.

We continually need to be seeking ways to help people connect with God, their humanity, their culture, and experience. This can be done out of the deep wells of Scripture, and especially from the promise of our Reformed vision that always looks expectantly to God to be acting. We do see churches finding new ways to express the promise of God, churches engaging in the struggle for justice, and churches adapting liturgical celebrations like the Eucharist to their context. All this draws on and deepens spirituality.

Loving our neighbour

We are churches who want to care for and care about those who suffer and those who celebrate. This is both a pastoral and a prophetic task. We have been moved and frustrated by the many stories we have heard about people and communities facing HIV/Aids. Healing is a very important theme in spirituality. Nevertheless, churches are not always places of consolation. We see ourselves building communities of hope, yet we often cut ourselves off from our neighbours and our communities. Our neighbours from other communities, other faiths, often have ideas and experiences to challenge and refresh us. We know how powerful concern for others and dialogue with others can be in enabling transformation and evangelism. We see churches doing

this and rejoice. We also know how risky and tiring it can be. Our spirituality needs to sustain us in this joyful duty.

The search for meaning in life

Spirituality seems to be something common to all peoples, a deeply rooted component of human identity. We know that people do search for meaning, not least when they suffer. Many young people lead their lives away from the church but do so searching for meaning and caring deeply about the issues of our world. We are reminded of the need for churches to be more readily open to these seekers. How much we can receive from children and young people, if we genuinely share together! Yet our worship can often assume that everyone is at the same place in her or his spiritual journey. Our worship needs to sit where people sit, addressing the issues and concerns of our daily lives through the rich stories and insights of our faith. It requires us to develop worship life beyond Sunday, to invite an outlook on life that is always expectant of God's presence there and a practice of justice, compassion, and solidarity that guides our work and our play and our shopping.

Key issues in our ecclesiological task

Spirituality and the Bible

We can see a danger for spirituality to be a form of self-centredness, to be a comforter at times when we need to be challenged. It can make us feel that our needs and issues are central to the world and to the reign of God. Thus our spirituality needs to be shaped by our biblical reflection on God's life and the life of the world, giving us points of reference beyond ourselves.

We also see the increasingly fresh ways people around us in the worldwide church are reading the Bible. Many of us are discovering, as if for the first time, that the Bible really is a profound resource for our spirituality. Indeed, it is our central resource. Stories that so often have been read against certain groups are beginning to be re-read and transformed by many of those thought unworthy of this task. There needs, then, to be a searching for the powerful questions to bring to our text and world, as we discern and hallow God's cry for life.

Spirituality and reforming our life

We are churches who seek to make room for the gifts and leadership of the whole priesthood of believers. We are still failing in this task, as many women, young people, indigenous peoples, and peoples with disabilities will testify. But we are reminded that if we are to achieve the Reformed vision of being a church that is always reforming it needs the diverse gifts, insights, and indeed spiritualities of the peoples who make up our churches. Once again we heard the conflicting stories of those who were finding that room was made for their particular and distinctive voice and of those who all too painfully were kept silenced. Achieving the full potential of this idea means the practice of community that makes room for new models of leadership, participation, worship, and service. We are also particularly concerned to see that discrimination rather than discernment marks our church life. We have heard how those with disability, especially, are not fully honoured in the church; people are resisting the necessary changes to enable their full participation. The Holy Spirit is at work in all people, but so many people's lives and gifts go unheeded.

Eucharist is still being used as a weapon to exclude others

Our celebration of Communion featured often in our discussions. We see it as one of the most special components of our worship, for as we share we are supposed to be drawn into mission and unity with Christ and each other. Yet we know, still, that there are churches refusing to ordain women, churches who use communion as a means to exclude others from the core life and story of the church. This is an aspect of our worship that can most powerfully equip us to resist, celebrate, and feel for others in the midst of everything we face. How can we remember Jesus at that table, on that night, with those disciples, and not be inspired to seek fullness of life? Far from allowing communion to divide us even within the Reformed tradition, we see it calling us once more into a passionate, generous, and joyful way of life together.

Challenge and opportunity of free and lively worship

Many of our churches around the world feel overshadowed by the free style of worship offered in many Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical churches. We heard stories of our congregations losing their young people to these churches. We wonder what there is for us to learn from these churches. Stories were shared of developing alternative styles of worship services, expressing different types:

traditional/contemporary/reflective. Sometimes these were resisted by groups within congregations, sometimes embraced reluctantly. Some felt there were dangers of disintegration if we have different services for different groups, but others felt it had worked when done sensitively. It seems that some churches cannot accept lively styles of worship, but we want to affirm that using drums is not a sin; clapping and dance are not disrespectful. But also we want to affirm the role of silence and meditation, of chanting, in fact all the modes of expression we could use. Being in Ghana and Africa excited us with so many examples of life-filled and lively worship and spirituality. We are grateful for all we have received from our Ghanaian hosts.

Recommendations:

1. WARC begin a serious study on Reformed perspectives on the Holy Spirit and spirituality to assist us [the member churches] in our journey towards life in fullness. This needs to be done within the regions but brought together into a global discussion.
2. WARC develop and document a theology of worship which honours the fullness of God, speaks to the diverse needs of our membership and communities, engages our cultures and honours and enriches our traditions, while raising up different worship models.
3. WARC facilitate processes of worship renewal within and between the regions in which we also face the questions of how we immerse our worship and spiritual life in the forms of our own culture. We especially encourage an interchange of all our creative methods, a sharing of musical, visual, liturgical, and biblical resources and approaches.
4. A practical and creative response be made to the issue of HIV/Aids: a gathering together of resources, stories and experiences to deepen our spirituality and its capacity to equip us to resist, celebrate, and feel for others in the midst of everything we face.
5. Noting again in our reflection on spirituality and worship the need to be sensitive and alert to issues of language and participation, we ask WARC to raise with member churches the issues shared here about divisive and exclusive practice at the Eucharist.
6. WARC remind member churches of the need to dialogue across theological divides within faith traditions and between them, if we are to enrich our spiritualities and our sense of Christ's Spirit at work amongst us.

We need to remember we must become examples of the change we are seeking.

Appendix F

Message Committee Report

World Alliance of Reformed Churches
24th General Council, Accra, Ghana
July 30 – August 13 2004

DOCUMENT GC 29-e
ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE MESSAGE COMMITTEE Final (with changes agreed on Wednesday August 11)

Delegates have several opportunities this week to speak as a general council. It is not possible to say everything at once. The committee and section work comes to the plenary in several reports, and we neither need nor desire simply to repeat what these say. Hence your committee has interpreted quite seriously its mandate “to express the heart of the council”.

We have tried, on your behalf, to draft a message to the churches that have sent us to Accra, summing up the spirit and substance of what we have tried to do here together. We have done so in the form of a letter from the delegates to the congregations of our churches.

The Alliance becomes what it is – a fellowship of churches – only when there is effective communication with and between our churches on as many levels of their life as possible. If our congregations remain in ignorance of what we have done here (or even, in many cases, of the very existence of the Alliance), we are not yet what we claim to be, still less what we aspire to be – a fellowship of churches sharing a common life and united in common action.

Our hope is that this letter can be read in thousands of our congregations and thereby strengthen our fellowship.

In addition to the “Letter from Accra”, we also provide congregations with a draft liturgy, enabling them to join in the commitments we have made here in Accra.

We shall include a summary of the council’s actions as an appendix.

Letter from Accra

From the delegates gathered from throughout the world in Accra, Ghana, at the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to the congregations of all those churches belonging to this fellowship, greetings. We have met as 400 delegates in this council from July 30 to August 12 2004, worshipping, studying the Bible, deliberating on urgent issues facing God’s world, and participating in the rich life of local churches in Ghana. We write to share with you what, on your behalf, we have discerned and experienced. Grace and peace to you from our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our most moving and memorable moments came from our visit to Elmina and Cape Coast, two “castles” on the Coast of Ghana that held those who had been captured into slavery, as they suffered in dungeons waiting for slave ships that would take them to unknown lands and destinies. Over brutal centuries, 15 million African slaves were transported to the Americas, and millions more were captured and died. On this trade in humans as commodities, wealth in Europe was built. Through their labour, sweat, suffering, intelligence and creativity, the wealth of the Americas was developed.

At the Elmina Castle, the Dutch merchants, soldiers, and Governor lived on the upper level, while the slaves were held in captivity one level below. We entered a room used as a church, with words from Psalm 132 on a sign still hanging above the door (“*For the Lord has chosen Zion...*”). And we imagined Reformed Christians worshipping their God while directly below them, right under their feet, those being sold into slavery languished in the chains and horror of those dungeons. For more than two centuries in that place this went on.

In angry bewilderment we thought, “How could their faith be so divided from life? How could they separate their spiritual experience from the torturous physical suffering directly beneath their feet? How could their faith be so blind?”

Some of us are descended from those slave traders and slave owners, and others of us are descendants of the those who were enslaved. We shared responses of tears, silence, anger, and lamentation. Those who are

Reformed Christians have always declared God's sovereignty over all life and all the earth. So how could these forbears of Reformed faith deny so blatantly what they believed so clearly?

Yet, as we listened to the voices today from our global fellowship, we discovered the mortal danger of repeating the same sin of those whose blindness we decried. For today's world is divided between those who worship in comfortable contentment and those enslaved by the world's economic injustice and ecological destruction who still suffer and die.

We perceive that the world today lives under the shadow of an oppressive empire. By this we mean the gathered power of pervasive economic and political forces throughout the globe that reinforce the division between the rich and the poor. Millions of those in our congregations live daily in the midst of these realities. The economies of many of our countries are trapped in international debt and imposed financial demands that worsen the lives of the poorest. So many suffer! Each day, 24,000 people die because of hunger and malnutrition, and global trends show that wealth grows for the few while poverty increases for the many. Meanwhile, millions of others in our congregations live lives as inattentive to this suffering as those who worshipped God on the floor above slave dungeons.

In our discussions in Accra – indeed in the past seven years of reflection since we last met in General Council at Debrecen, Hungary – we have come to realize that this is not just another “issue” to be “addressed”. Rather, it goes to the heart of our confession of faith. How can we say that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord over all life, and not stand against all that denies the promise of fullness of life to the world?

If Jesus Christ is not Lord over all, he is not Lord at all. That is why we find in the Bible a constant criticism of idolatry, emphasized in our Reformed tradition. To declare faith in the one true God is to reject divided loyalties between God and Mammon, dethrone the false gods of wealth and power, and turn from false promises to the true God of life.

We know that this does not come easily for any of us. Yet our hope lies in confessing that the power of the resurrected Christ can overturn the idols and the modern gods that hold the world captive to injustice and ecological destruction.

Therefore, we invite you, in Reformed churches throughout the world, to take this stance of faith, standing against all that denies life and hope for millions, as a concrete expression of our allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, this is a grave and serious invitation. As those who have met on your behalf in Accra, we declare to you that the integrity of our Christian faith is now at stake, just as it was for those worshipping in the Elmina castle. Confessing our faith and giving our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ requires our opposition to all that denies the fullness of life to all those in our world so loved by God.

Such a confession also sends us forth with new eyes of faith into the world. Mission, it can be said, is embodied in the life of the church in the world. In Accra we recognized that living according to what we say we believe changes our understanding of mission today. We recalled that the church was born in a time of empire. God's Spirit called forth the church, in response to God's work in the world, as a new community bearing witness to a new global reality and opposing the false claims of earthly gods.

God's mission involves your congregation and each of ours in fresh and challenging ways today. How can we share the message and liberating love of Christ's life in those places where suffering and death seem to reign? This much we discovered for certain in Accra: more than ever, faithful mission today requires our connection – really it demands bonds of belonging – between one another as churches. The challenges we now face in proclaiming the Good News will simply overwhelm us if we confront them as individual churches alone.

In today's world the divisions between the North and the South, the rich and the poor, and the powerful and the powerless, grow sharper and seek to isolate us from one another. That's why mission requires us as churches to belong more deeply to one another, overcoming those divisions through the work of God's Spirit as an evidence of the hope that is offered to the world. In our inclusive fellowship here in Accra, we have experienced a taste of this hope and seek to share it with you.

In this council we have focused on current threats to life, especially economic neoliberalism and the arrogance of imperial power. Our churches in central and eastern Europe remind us that for long decades they suffered under the tyranny of another empire. The wounds of this past are not yet healed. We recognize the need for all of us – East and West – to work through this bleak chapter of our history, and to ask whether Reformed churches in the West heard sufficiently the cry of their sisters and brothers in the East.

Being truly mutual and accountable is hard and even painful, testing the depth of our trust. It requires the vulnerability demonstrated in Jesus. But there is no other way for us to follow God's mission, and building unity for this purpose is one of the practical things the World Alliance of Reformed Churches can make possible.

But we discovered one more truth in Accra that we want to share. If confessing what we believe as Christians requires our spiritual and practical resistance to economic injustice as well as environmental destruction, then we need new depths of spirituality. This isn't mere political activism; we're being called to a spiritual engagement against evil, and for that we need our lives to be deeply rooted in the power of God's Spirit. To put it simply, we need, as never before, the transformation of our lives promised through Jesus Christ.

This spiritual challenge flows from the words found in John 10:10, where Jesus declares the promise "that all may have life in fullness". That biblical theme, in fact, wove itself through the work of the council during these days. Our Christian spirituality opens us to the presence and power of God in all the creation. Further, it draws us into ever-deeper community with one another. Deepening our spirituality can connect us with God's power for the healing of personal wounds, social scars, and political divisions.

We also realized more clearly than ever that such spiritual transformation and the community that it creates are only possible as the gifts of women and young people are freely exercised and liberated in our life together. We experienced a glimpse of this in our gathering, as both women and youth shared so richly in worship, Bible study, presentations to the council, and leadership roles, and we long for the spirituality that makes this possible in every one of our congregations.

Because we were in Accra, Ghana, we were blessed constantly with the spiritual vitality and power of the local churches that hosted and received us. The drums and songs that saturate the soul of the African church permeated our worship. We marvelled at offerings given with such dancing and joy from hearts so full of gratitude. Here we tasted a spirituality that seemed so whole, so worshipful, so connected in community, and so embracing of God's creation. It draws from the gifts of the culture and sings not only in these enchanting songs, but also in their daily lives, as their witness to the fullness of life in Christ.

As we entered the homes of our hosts on a weekend of visits to churches throughout Ghana and then were carried away by the power of their worship, our hearts were filled with hope and gratitude. We experienced the warmth of their hospitality and the power of God's Spirit to bring new life and community. And we knew this is the sign of the only power that can sustain us as we confess our faith in Christ, stand against the powers of evil that threaten life, and live in mission with the hope of fullness of life for all promised by our Lord.

We want you to join in the confession and covenant with one another we have made in Accra. As part of the fellowship of those churches throughout the globe that share in common the Reformed tradition of Christian faith, we long for our experience here to enrich and encourage your mission and ministry.

We've included a liturgy that could enable you to share in worship the same confession, commitments, and promises that we have made here at this council. And we've also included an appendix that gives a summary of the many other urgent issues and concerns from around the globe that received our attention.

Our prayer for you is that God may reveal to you in fresh ways how our faith is deeply connected to all of life. May none of us ever live our faith insensitive to brutal suffering and indifferent to urgent cries from our world. May all of us know the power of God at work in our Lord Jesus Christ to overcome evil and offer to all the world life in the fullness intended by God.

And may the grace of God, the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever more.

*Accra, Ghana
August 12 2004*

Appendix G

Letter from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Interchurch Relations Committee of the Christian
Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560
Verenigde Staten van Amerika

Protestantse Kerk
in Nederland

Protestants
Landelijk Dienstencentrum

Joseph Haydnlaan 2a
P.O. Box 8504
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Telefoon (030) 880 14 03/14 05
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Subject

relation Christian Reformed Church and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Dealt with by
E. Overeem
Direct line
+31 30 880 14 02
e.overeem@pkn.nl

Date
December 3, 2004

Reference
0412.033b

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

After the visit of the brothers Engelhard, Bierma and Vandervaart to our synod and to our offices in May we have been discussing the relation between the Christian Reformed Church and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands for some time. It was decided not to address the Interchurch Relations Committee before it had the chance and opportunity to meet and hear the report of its delegates. We thought however it might be helpful to share some insights with the IRC concerning the future of the relationship between the PCN (as continuation of the former GKN) and the CRC. The 2003 synod of the CRC had adopted the recommendation of the IRC "that synod declare that the current restricted relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN be retained until the new Protestant Church of the Netherlands has formally begun and the IRC has had time to assess what relationship is appropriate for the CRC to maintain with the new denomination". The IRC will be expected to present a report on the relationship to the 2005 synod of the CRC. Perhaps some considerations from the Netherlands could contribute to that report.

Let me first confirm what the Dutch delegates in the May meeting have made clear again, after having done so in previous meetings. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands is according to its church order and selfunderstanding the continuation of three former churches: the Netherlands Reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). All historic confessions, including the Three Forms of Unity, are mentioned in the church order. All ecumenical commitments of the three separate churches will be honoured by the Protestant Church. In our church order there is a clear provision for bilateral relationships (called "ecclesiastical fellowship" by the CRC). There should be no misunderstanding that the Protestant Church is willingly committing itself to being a full fledged sister church of many other churches, the CRC cherished among them. On our part we tried to carefully prepare the CRC for this new reality: we included in our delegations to Grand Rapids, sent to discuss the difficulties in our relationship, representatives of the Netherlands Reformed Church (Rev. van Hilten and Rev. Blenk); we arranged a meeting with the Reformed Alliance (Gereformeerde Bond) in the Netherlands Reformed Church during a visit of IRC delegates to our country. In all frankness I have to confess that the Dutch delegates to the May meeting

(mrs. Nauta, Rev. Plaisier, Rev. Visser, Prof. Koffeman and myself) felt some disappointment: after all our careful explanations and clarifications we did not expect a misunderstanding of our church order to come up again, i.e. that the church order had no provision for bilateral relationships. Again I state quite clearly, on behalf of the other participants in the discussions, that the unification of the Dutch churches did not change our ecumenical attitude and our desire to be recognised again as a sister church in good standing.

Date
December 3, 2004

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In our May meeting a new proposal was brought forward by the CRC delegates. There should be a new category of relationships in the CRC ecumenical charter: not only churches "in ecclesiastical fellowship", but "churches in dialogue". As it was not clear yet what this category of relationships would mean, the PCN delegates feared that this would be a step backward. A – even restricted – ecclesiastical fellowship is preferred above a – perhaps noncommittal – dialogue. The policy of the GKN has been directed towards a restoring of ecclesiastical fellowship. The PCN commits itself to the same policy. To introduce a new category of ecumenical relationships without making clear what its provisions are is a change in ecumenical policy that does not take into consideration the contents of our intense discussions in the past years and the amount of energy we thought worthwhile spending on restoring our relationship.

Why is our relation so important to us? The main answer is very simple. We do love your church. We see in the CRC a zeal for being a witness of Jesus Christ. Your passion for mission work is inspiring us. We share a common heritage. Even if the CRC has become a complete North American Church, speaking a different language than we do, having more or less a different type of liturgy, dealing with questions specific for your society – we do understand one another because we have so much in common. When we meet, we almost immediately recognise one another as family or relatives. We hope this feeling is the same on your part. The relation with us might also be important to the CRC. The Netherlands have become a very secularised society in which the church is marginalized, not anymore having the established position it used to have. This change is difficult, but on the other hand it is a blessing in disguise. We have to go back to the deepest source of our faith in Jesus Christ. People are asking something real from the church and it is our prayer that we can give them this. It is a challenge to serve the Lord in the world we live in. We have started to rediscover evangelism as a calling of the church, as you may have experienced during our Synod. As we benefit from our sister churches and are learning from them, we daresay that other churches can also benefit from our experiences.

Allow me to make an observation. The contacts between our churches have become a little bit one-sided and needlessly limited. We have been discussing all kinds of "faith and order" – matters: the position of our homosexual congregation members, the REC report on hermeneutics and ethics, the authority of Holy Scripture, the relationship between church and the people of Israel. Those discussions have been helpful to us: the required clarifications helped us to rethink or reformulate our positions, even when they did not change. In our meetings we discussed like family members, and were prepared to open ourselves to one

another like almost nowhere in the wide ecumenical circles. Even if the outcome of the process is decided on unfavourable by the CRC synod, the process has been a unique one for all participants.

The restrictions in our relationship, imposed by the CRC synod, however limited our contacts to members of the ecumenical committees on both sides and did not provide space for working together and discovering possibilities of mutual co-operation: "life and work". Both aspects of ecumenicity are inseparable indeed. We could learn so much from one another, and share our insights in mission and diaconate programs at home and abroad. In stead of that we as it were "impoverished" ourselves to a narrow understanding of ecclesiastical fellowship with restrictions, without making insights gained from the broad life and work of the churches fruitful for our selfunderstanding as ecumenical partners. We should therefore keep the relation at such a level that we at least could work together. In stead of discussing our differences all the time we could in working together discover that we not only share a past, but share a future also.

According to our church order synod has to decide about bilateral relationships with other churches that are important to us because of common ties of history and confession. Synod can choose out of certain possibilities: to receive members of the partner church as (guest)members; to authorise ministers of the partner church to preach the word of God and to administer the holy sacraments; to send delegates to the synod of the partner church. When we are talking about a bilateral relationship a decision of synod is always required. However, it will be a local decision of the church council whether the possibilities synod grants will be put into effect in the local situation. Our church order stresses the local responsibility and the local empowerment of the congregations. Even if the synod in a bilateral agreement has authorised ministers of the partner church to preach the word of God, it is a local decision whether the minister from the CRC on a visit to the Netherlands is invited to do so.

We do not ask other churches to grant privileges we ourselves on a synodical level cannot guarantee to be granted in all local congregations. We think however that on the basis of the intense and fruitful discussions we had in the past years – we never have been so busy seeing one another and talking than in those past years of difficulties in our relationship! - the restrictions on a synodical level should be lifted and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands should be in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church. We could live with restrictions at the local level: in ecumenical life there should be no automatism, but a conviction that people called together by our Lord Jesus Christ to serve Him should never be kept separate for unnecessary reasons.

Dear sisters and brothers, we hope you will give our letter your careful consideration. We wish you the wisdom and blessing of our Lord in preparing your report to synod.

Christian greetings, on behalf of the ecumenical committee,

E. Overeem, deputy director of ministries

Date
December 3, 2004

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0412.033b

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I. Brief overview

In 2004, the committee published twenty-seven sermons that are available in printed form as well as on the denominational website (www.crcna.org). During its 64 years of printing sermons, this committee published some 1,300 sermons. Starting this year the sermons will be available on the above website only.

A limited number of back copies are still available by contacting Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg; 37 Brick Pond Lane; Woodstock, ON, N4V 1G1; or call 519-539-2117.

Committee members Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, Rev. Ralph Koops, and Rev. John Zantingh are retiring. We thank them for their much-appreciated services. The following have been nominated as their replacements: Rev. John Kerssies, pastor of Collingwood CRC; Rev. Gordon Pols, pastor of Ancaster CRC; and Rev. Paul Stadt, pastor of Chatham First CRC.

The committee is composed of Rev. Hendrik Bruinsma (2007), chairman; Rev. Gerrit Bomhof (2005), alternate; Rev. Jack Westerhof (2006); Rev. Ralph Koops (2005); Rev. John Zantingh (2005); and Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary / treasurer.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the work of the committee and encourage the churches to avail themselves of the sermons for reading services on the CRCNA website.

B. That synod approve the appointments of Rev. John Kerssies, Rev. Gordon Pols, and Rev. Paul Stadt for three-year terms.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Gerrit Bomhof, alternate
Hendrik Bruinsma, chairman
Ralph Koops
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary / treasurer
Jack Westerhof
John Zantingh

I. Background

The Sesquicentennial Committee was appointed by Synod 2001 with the following mandate:

That synod appoint a representative committee whose duty it will be to present to [synod] . . . a set of plans for a church-wide celebration of our sesquicentennial in 2007. The plans shall include a theme, programs, celebrations, publications, contests, and conferences that are suitable and significant for the occasion. An expanded budget along with possible funding sources will also be included in the proposal.

(*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 453)

The committee is composed of the following members:

Rev. Moses Chung
Rev. Michael De Vries
Dr. David H. Engelhard
Rev. Esteban Lugo
Dr. Richard H. Harms
Ms. Miriam Ippel

Rev. Stanley Jim
Mrs. Darlene Meyering
Mrs. Cindy Vander Kodde
Mr. Nathan Vander Stelt
Rev. Jack B. Vos

Synod 2003 approved the theme for the sesquicentennial (Grace Through Every Generation) and gave general endorsement to the various ideas found in the committee's report (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 254-57 and *Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 625). It also endorsed the idea that the theme be approached through three key thoughts: remembering, rejoicing, and rededicating. Synod 2004 approved three dates for sesquicentennial worship (April 22, 2007; June 10, 2007; and October 14, 2007), with emphasis on remembering in the April worship, on rejoicing in the June worship, and on rededicating in the October worship (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 315-17 and *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 549).

II. Plans

A. Designated worship services

Rev. John M. Rottman, professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, has agreed to produce worship material for the three designated worship dates. He foresees producing a short narrative, a sample sermon, and exegetical notes for consideration by ministers when planning these worship services. Not all of the materials will be intended for use in a single sermon, rather they will be offered as sermon helps to be used at the discretion of the individual minister or congregation. Among the material to be included will be suggested readings from the Old Testament and New Testament. The committee is still considering the inclusion of readings from the Gospels.

The June 10, 2007, worship service opening synod will be held in De Vos Hall in Grand Rapids and will be broadcast in a digital format so that those not able to attend may participate through viewing.

B. Popular history of the CRC

In cooperation with Faith Alive Resources, the committee is assisting Rev. Scott Hoezee, pastor of the Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in researching a popular history of the CRC to be available in December 2006.

This project will focus particularly on the last fifty years in the history of the denomination and as such will compliment *Our Family Album*, published in 1998. Each congregation will be offered a free copy for its use; additional copies will be sold for \$6.95.

C. *Origins*

The spring 2007 issue of *Origins* (published in part by the Archives of the CRC) is scheduled to carry a series of articles on the various ethnic communities within the CRC. The following communities are scheduled to be highlighted: African American, Chinese, Hispanic/Latino, Korean, Native American, and Southeast Asian. Dr. Richard Harms, a member of the committee, is editor of *Origins* and has already received a commitment from four authors to participate.

D. *Conference planning*

A conference subcommittee was appointed and met with several interested parties and suggests a three-day conference with a plenary session beginning Thursday, September 13, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. with a speaker to focus on Worship and Culture: The Reformed Faith as Transnational. Breakout sessions could focus on topics such as Sietze Buning, Diet Emans, or James Schaap readings; missions/results/changes; a documentary on worship, immigration, and acculturation; ecumenical efforts while retaining a Reformed identity; Korean Presbyterianism; Christian schools since 1857; from Young Calvinist to Dynamic Youth; CRC members in society, as theologians, as philosophers, as politicians, as business people, as academics. Principle presentations from the conference will be recorded and published on a four-digital-video-disk (DVD) set.

On the four weekends between this September conference and the October 14 worship service, the committee proposes a series of mini or satellite conferences to be held at various sites. It might be possible for these conferences to be partnered with the fall classical meetings, on either the Friday or the Saturday portion of the sessions. The committee is still seeking funding for this.

The subcommittee is working with staff of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to produce a DVD detailing the CRC at worship during the past fifty years.

E. *Children and youth*

A subcommittee is in contact with Dynamic Youth Ministries (GEMS, Cadets, and Youth Unlimited) about exploring ways these ministries can effectively develop curriculum and/or integrate the theme Grace through Every Generation into their materials and/or programming in 2007. The committee will also work with Faith Alive to contribute to the development of a curriculum segment on CRC history for ninth graders.

F. *Logo, hymn text, hymn tune contests*

The committee solicited sesquicentennial logos designed by young people and adults to be used on event material and in promotional and fundraising efforts. Seventeen submissions came from adults, and thirty-three were received from young people. The committee foresees possible uses for these logos on letterhead, in public-relations material, and on products produced for the sesquicentennial. After careful deliberation and discussion, the committee selected a winner in each category. The hymn text contest will follow.

G. Bulletin covers

The committee will have bulletin covers designed that are appropriate to the theme of the sesquicentennial and produce enough of such covers to be used at the discretion of the local congregations.

III. Expenses

The committee is projecting a cost of \$190,500 to fund the plans described. To date, likely funding sources for \$84,000 have been identified. The committee will continue to identify sources until the remaining \$105,500 is raised.

IV. Recommendation

That synod approve the work of the committee and encourage all congregations to send representative images, audio recordings, and audio-visual recordings of the church in worship to the committee in care of the Archives at Calvin College.

Sesquicentennial Committee

Moses Chung

Michael De Vries

David H. Engelhard, chair

Richard H. Harms, reporter

Miriam Ippel

Stanley Jim

Esteban Lugo

Darlene Meyering

Cindy Vander Kodde

Nathan Vander Stelt

Jack B. Vos

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

Dordt College celebrated its fiftieth anniversary during the 2004-2005 academic year. Jubilee events took place throughout the year and across the country, focusing on the theme: It's the Perspective: Remembering, Celebrating, and Sharing the Vision.

This summer, we will continue to celebrate in a final three-day event on campus on July 1-3, 2005. We are preparing to welcome back alumni from all over the country as we spend a few days remembering the foundation that was laid in the past, celebrating the continuing vision for service in Christ's kingdom, and examining our future plans to strengthen and share our perspective with more people in the future.

We took time during this past year to remember the foundation that was laid as well as the early leaders of Dordt College who made sure that Dordt College stayed true to that foundation. The Christian Reformed Church and its vision for proclaiming Christ's rule over all of life played an integral role in the development of Dordt College. Early leaders such as Rev. B.J. Haan, Dr. John Hulst, and others kept the vision in focus. The same vision shapes our educational activities today.

We also took time this year to celebrate the current faculty and staff who have kept the vision strong, even while applying it in new and unique ways. This past year, we developed new initiatives in biotechnology, signing an agreement with TransOva Genetics of Sioux Center that will enhance our ability to impact this new and dynamic field of study for years to come.

This year, we communicated our vision in numerous creative ways by commissioning several publications and works of art. Art professor Susan Van Geest was commissioned to produce a piece entitled, *The Space Between: Jubilee 2005*, which can be seen at the entrance of the John and Louise Hulst Library. Dale Grotenhuis, professor emeritus of music, composed *Lord You Have Been Our Dwelling Place*, which premiered at the 2004 Fall Music Festival in October. Renowned Dutch organist, Sietze de Vries, composed his own rendition of Psalm 150, which was commissioned by Dordt College to celebrate Dordt's fiftieth anniversary and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dordt's Casavant pipe organ. One of our alumni, Steven Wiersum, wrote a play entitled *Jubilee! A Comedy in Five Acts*. Norm Mattheis, professor emeritus of art, created a series of paintings and combined them with reflections written by professor of theology, Syd Hielema, into a book entitled *Witness*. Another book entitled *Celebrating the Vision: The Reformed Perspective of Dordt College* was also published through the Dordt College Press. It includes academic papers, from current faculty members, that explore Dordt's perspective in multiple academic disciplines.

In April, Jubilee concerts in Sioux Falls, Des Moines, and Minneapolis showcased the talents of current students in Dordt's choirs and instrumental groups. Student talent was also used in the *Vision at Work and Play* productions that took place throughout the year at thirty-six sites in sixteen states and four provinces.

On campus, we held monthly convocations as a way of encouraging students and professors to come together as an academic community to examine our vision and how it relates to numerous disciplines and callings. The individuals who were asked to speak represented a wide variety of

vocations such as law, television production, higher education administration, and ministry, but all understood their vocations to be a response to Christ's lordship over their lives and their work.

As we celebrated Christ's lordship throughout the year, we also took some time to reflect on how that lordship would be made manifest in the future. In October, the board of trustees approved a new ten-year strategic plan. The plan sees Dordt as a college that is thoroughly mission driven; pervasively Reformed in its perspective; and a center for reformational thinking, scholarship, and instruction. It sees Dordt as a college whose academic quality is recognized and whose graduates make vital contributions to the Christian community. It also sees Dordt as a college that maintains a significant presence beyond Northwest Iowa and has the financial resources to sustain its continuing mission for years to come.

The new strategic plan correctly places a heavy emphasis on the mission of Dordt College. Our mission is a bold one that will require the support and dedication of many people from faculty and staff to churches and alumni. As we have seen throughout our Jubilee celebrations this year, our mission is precisely what has rallied support for Dordt College for fifty years. It is our mission that will continue to drive the college and strengthen its support for many years to come. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) is a member-supported graduate school in the Reformed tradition with a mandate to advance Christian scholarship and provide graduate-level education that addresses the spiritual foundations of learning. ICS seeks to equip Christians to be effective leaders in the academic arena and in other areas of society and provides creative, biblical, and thoughtful academic leadership to students and the wider Christian community. ICS is an affiliate member of the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto.

In December 2004, ICS was informed by the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities in the Province of Ontario that she would consent to ICS's application to grant its own doctor and master of arts degrees in philosophy. As a result, ICS has now become one of the first privately funded independent academic institutions in Canada to be able to grant its own doctor of philosophy degree. Work has begun to secure an amendment to ICS's enabling legislation, *The ICS Act (1983)*, in the Ontario Provincial Legislature. The amendment will incorporate the changes granted by ministerial consent into the Act to make the changes permanent.

The ministerial consent was the culmination of a lengthy application to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), a year-long process that included an organizational and program quality review. These were conducted through external peer-review panels. ICS's program quality review was extremely favorable, with ICS meeting or exceeding standards on all counts.

Excellence within ICS's large and vibrant student body was evidenced throughout the past year. Mr. Neal DeRoo, a student working on his master of arts degree in philosophy was awarded a prestigious new master's-level scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which awarded such scholarships to fewer than a thousand students nationwide. A number of students also delivered papers at academic conferences in places as far flung as Tennessee; Prince Edward Island; and Aberdeen, Scotland. These were important opportunities for ICS students to present the results of their work in national and international fora on the place of faith in the academy.

Over the past year, ICS faculty have been widely published in a number of academic journals, and two professors launched new books toward the end of 2004. Lambert Zuidervart's book *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse and Imaginative Disclosure* was published by Cambridge University Press, while Sylvia Keesmaat is the coauthor (with Brian Walsh) of *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, which was published by IVP.

In 2004, ICS was pleased to announce the institution of the Herman Dooyeweerd Chair in Social and Political Philosophy in 2005. The Chair honors the work of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), a prominent Dutch philosopher and long-time professor at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Dooyeweerd was the chief architect of the philosophical tradition known as "reformational philosophy," a philosophy that holistically brings together various disciplines with faith at its center. The Chair, an academic position, has been funded through a generous donation from the Verbrugge Family Trust and is held by

Dr. Jonathan Chaplin, who has been associate professor of political theory at ICS since 1999 and is currently chair of ICS' Academic Council.

This year, ICS agreed to continue its affiliation with the Toronto School of Theology (TST). The relationship between TST and ICS allows for a unique, faith-based, dialogue between the disciplines of philosophy and theology. In the five years since ICS became an affiliate member of the Toronto School of Theology, ICS has benefited from the contact with TST's students, who have, in turn, benefited from the philosophical breadth ICS provides. Additionally, ICS students benefit from the academic diversity that TST's course calendar provides.

God has richly blessed ICS as it continues its work of being "salt and light" in higher education. We are grateful to God's many wonderful blessings in the past year and look forward with joy and anticipation to the challenges ahead. Voluntary income makes up 75 percent of the ICS budget, and about 80 percent of that is provided by Christian Reformed churches and their members. The faculty, staff, and students at ICS are grateful for the prayer and financial support coming from the CRC, and we continue to depend on your support.

Institute for Christian Studies
Harry Fernhout, president

On behalf of faculty, staff, and students of The King's University College, greetings to all delegates of Synod 2005.

The past year has seen a number of important developments at King's. Enrollment is at approximately 650 students this year. We continue to see substantial numbers of students who are members of the Christian Reformed Church.

We are pleased to report that the Board of Governors has appointed a new president to replace Dr. Van Andel upon his retirement in July 2005, after serving King's for twenty years as president. The new president will be Dr. J. Harry Fernhout, academic scholar, author, and current president of the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto, Ontario. Dr. Fernhout is very familiar with the Reformed tradition that forms the basis of the King's mission and statement of faith and is able to communicate that vision to different communities. His vision for Christian higher education is in tune with that of the university. He has demonstrated throughout his fifteen-year tenure at the ICS that he is able to provide strong leadership to a Christian university-level institution. We are thankful to God for him and look forward to his arrival this summer.

We were also pleased to welcome Professor John Sutherland as vice president academic beginning in July 2004. Professor Sutherland is a scholar of business and economics, and succeeded Dr. Keith Ward who retired following twenty-five years of dedicated service. Six new faculty members joined us this fall. Appointed, as assistant professors, were Dr. Stephen Martin (Theology), Dr. Sarah Richart (Biology), Mr. Glenn Rideout (Education), and Ms. Nora O'Neill (Computing Science). Both Mr. Rideout and Ms. O'Neill are currently completing their doctorates. Ms. Hendriatta Wong and Mr. Gordon Preston were appointed as associate professors of business. All are committed Christians. We are currently interviewing candidates for positions in biology, education, business, and computing science, to be appointed in summer 2005. Recruiting faculty who understand and can further the mission of King's continues to be a very important and challenging task in our growing institution.

This past fall, King's celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a convocation service, an exhibition of art works by Christian artists, and a celebratory anniversary banquet. We are grateful to God for sustaining the institution over all these years and for providing all our needs in the context of sustained growth.

In late August, our new student apartment residence welcomed close to one hundred senior students. The building features independent suites, with each suite having six single bedrooms, a kitchen, a living room, and two bathrooms. The new residence is self-financing, with student rent paying for mortgage and operating costs.

In September, construction started on a \$6 million, 4,300 square-meter academic addition to our main building. The Growing to Serve Capital Campaign to finance the new wing is continuing, with almost \$3.6 million collected in gifts and pledges toward the \$4 million goal. We are grateful for the strong support of the community for this project and will continue to work toward reaching the goal. The addition will be ready for use in January 2006.

We are thankful for the continued support we receive from CRC congregations in the form of ministry shares and collections for King's. This is very important to us and helps us to provide financial aid to students and keep tuition at an affordable level. Please continue to support King's with your prayers, your encouragement, and your financial support.

The King's University College
Henk Van Andel, president

We are thankful to the Lord for the many blessings we have experienced over the past year and are grateful for this opportunity to share some highlights with you.

First, we give thanks for the launch of our new provincially accredited teacher education program—the only accredited Christian teacher education program in Ontario and one of five in all of Canada. Understandably, it has already begun to attract more students to our campus.

This year almost 900 are enrolled, which is an increase of almost 7 percent from last year, and 450 of these students live on campus in apartments and our unique townhouse style residences. We are encouraged that a new generation of students is seeking to be equipped by the scripturally directed university-level liberal arts and science education we offer.

Our students come from across Canada, twelve U.S. states, and ten other countries. They represent forty-five different denominational backgrounds and a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Christian Reformed students account for 48 percent of our enrolment, and it concerns us that this number is declining somewhat. However, students of Reformed background still make up 62 percent of the student body. The rest of our students come from evangelical (30%) or mainline (8%) churches.

They are unified in their faith in Christ and their desire to embrace a vision of life based on the Reformed understanding of the comprehensive scope of his lordship. There is a vibrant spiritual atmosphere on our campus, and we look forward to hiring a full-time chaplain to foster this. Through our students, many of whom volunteer in the downtown core, and our graduates who take up positions of employment, we are also gaining a higher profile in the Hamilton community and surrounding area, which is opening new opportunities for us to be a witness.

As a result of increasing student numbers, we continue to add new faculty members to strengthen our academic programs. We are encouraged to be able to find committed and qualified faculty who share Redeemer's vision. In addition to teaching, faculty continue to be of service through their scholarship, which is also part of our mission. Faculty are providing leadership in the Christian community as well as in the wider academy through projects and publications. We are pleased to be the North American home, together with Baylor University, of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar under the leadership of Dr. Craig Bartholomew, who holds the H. Evan Runner Chair in Philosophy.

Additional students, faculty, and staff have provided the impetus for a capital campaign to expand our academic and residence facilities. We give thanks for progress in the campaign to over \$9 million, enabling us to begin construction of a \$6.2 million library-classroom expansion after having already completed a \$1 million addition to our academic building. Together with a new residence and with infrastructure improvements, this expansion will enable us to accommodate up to one thousand students.

We are indeed very grateful for the prayer and financial support we have received from the Christian Reformed community, including the ministry shares sent to us by area Christian Reformed churches. These are essential to

continue our mission of providing Christian university education and promoting Christian scholarship from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective.

Redeemer University College
Justin D. Cooper, president

We wish to thank synod and members of the Christian Reformed Church for the support and encouragement you continue to extend our way. Since our founding in 1939, where the “fit” of this institution in the context of the denomination was strongly debated, to today, where Reformed Bible College (RBC) has become a major resource to the CRC for pastors, evangelists, missionaries, social workers, and the like, you have faithfully embraced the college with your financial support, professional guidance, and personal affirmation. The growth we have experienced over the years has been clearly aided through your sense of partnership. Thank you!

Enrollment continues to hold its own at around 290 students. We are at our second highest enrollment ever in full-time students, and early indications are for some growth in the fall of 2005. The strongest majors are in Youth Ministry; Social Work; Pre-Sem; and the majors we have as consortium programs with Calvin College, Cornerstone University, and Grand Rapids Community College.

Through studies, RBC is aware of the depth of concern over vacant pulpits and the prospect of a large number of retiring pastors over the next few years in both CRC and Reformed churches. We take seriously our mission to locate and train students for the ministry and so have taken this on as a point of emphasis in our recruiting and contact with pastors and youth workers. I expect this to be a meaningful part of our responding to the denomination for the support we have and continue to receive.

The college will be going through its regular reaccreditation processes in the coming year. We are accredited through both the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (as is Calvin) and the Association of Biblical Higher Education. A new and specialized accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education, set to be finalized this October, will make RBC the second Bible college in the nation to have an accredited social work program. This is a very important step to us in expressing the word and deed character of our Reformed worldview.

Strategic planning and assessment have been emphasized strongly over the past year as we have increased expectations on the professional development of our academic program and support systems. Clearly detailed goals, data gathering, analysis, accountability, and informed decision-making are concepts that more regularly form part of our daily and long-range activities. I am grateful for the corporate ownership of this improved planning and operation at RBC and for the increased focus, efficiency, and good stewardship derived from it.

Although we have emphasized and seen many technical improvements with the college this year, our ministry-directed purpose has remained clear and strong. Our primary mission, size, and the degree to which the practical application of faith motivates not only students to attend but also faculty to teach here create an atmosphere that is spiritually dynamic. I invite you to our website, www.reformed.edu, to further see how our concept of being a *comprehensive Bible college* works its way out in equipping students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve Christ’s church and his world effectively.

Reformed Bible College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Trinity Christian College continues its forward momentum with increasing numbers of students, faculty, and new initiatives. With an enrollment of traditional-age students of 973, and a total enrollment of 1234 in fall 2004, the college is experiencing an ongoing sense of fulfilling its mission to shape lives and transform culture. Of that 973 enrollment number, 53 percent of traditional-age students are drawn from the Christian Reformed Church and other Reformed denominations. We are thankful for the continuing support from churches and individuals who are committed to making Christian higher education a priority for future generations of Christian leaders.

Since 2000, the college has added three new buildings and renovated three others. The latest construction project was the completion of Alumni Hall, a residence for 180 students, in fall 2004. One of the oldest buildings on campus, the former Pro Shop, was recently remodeled to accommodate several administrative offices, including the offices of community partnerships, student development, and human resources. A planned Art and Communication Center, encompassing 63,000-square feet, will provide a black-box theater, art galleries, media and graphic design labs, and several general-use classrooms to meet the growing demand for more teaching space. With more than half of the funding already in place, the college hopes to break ground on this essential building in fall 2005.

Trinity has established the Church Connection Initiative that seeks to serve churches in local and nearby classes by offering resources, arranging occasions for gatherings, and responding to requests. This program seeks to draw Trinity students into the excitement of ministry, whether as the church's next generation of laity or leadership. This program is made possible through a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment, Inc.

This year, Trinity recognized the importance of identifying and building relationships within the context of its larger community through a newly created office of community partnerships. In recent months, the director of community partnerships, Ms. Felecia Thompson, has been instrumental in bringing greater awareness of such opportunities to campus. Her office sponsored a visit by Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika, ambassador to the United States from the African nation of Zambia.

In addition, the college was awarded a three-year grant through the Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA). Trinity is sharing a \$48,000 award with Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois, to fulfill educational initiatives in their respective communities: Trinity is providing tutoring for students in Chicago's Roseland community, while Greenville is focusing on students in its local rural setting. HECA grants are designed to promote effective use of resources through cooperation among institutions, achieve an equitable distribution of education services, and develop innovative concepts and applications. This summer, the college will host a week-long Pre-College Institute for students from Roseland and the Greenville area to stay on campus while taking classes.

Another area that exemplifies Trinity's commitment to both its educational mission and the needs of its community is the cooperative venture between the college and Elim Christian Services, Palos Heights, Illinois. The two institutions have created a Center for Special Education at Trinity for the

purpose of encouraging the development of special-education teachers who share a Reformed perspective. The Center will provide additional resources for current special-education teachers at Trinity and foster research-based methods for teaching and learning in the special-education classroom. Last summer, the Center for Special Education sponsored its first Summer Institute of Discovery at Elim Christian Schools for six weeks in June to introduce local high school students to opportunities in special education.

Members of the Trinity community look forward with great anticipation to hosting the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in June. We are thankful for this opportunity to welcome participants and guests to our campus and pray for God's blessing upon this time of worship, deliberations, and fellowship.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

At the time synod meets, Cadets and counselors from all over North America will be finalizing their preparations for the international camporee. Well over one thousand boys and men are expected to meet each other on the Iowa prairies just east of Des Moines for eight days of wilderness camping, spirituality, building skills, and making new friends. The theme this year is Trail of Discovery, and our quest to find God at the international camporee will be tied in with the Corps of Discovery—the Lewis and Clark expedition that traveled through that area two hundred years ago. Please pray for us as we spend July 20-27 together, Lord willing, in his great outdoors.

In addition to the international camporee, clubs and councils still hold their own camping and hiking adventures. These remain one of the most effective means of building relationships between men and boys, while drawing both closer to God.

At their annual board meeting in January, the Cadet board (called Congress) overwhelmingly decided to leave two things as they are. A proposal to discuss changing the name was quashed, as was a proposal to investigate changing the uniform. The congressmen determined that those two items still serve the organization well, and so the news from Congress was that there is no news.

There are other changes, though, as publications continue to improve and use more color, and new sets of Bible studies are introduced. We praise God that he continues to bless this ministry as we seek to serve him.

Cadeting is found in more than six hundred churches, about five hundred of which are Christian Reformed.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior

Through intentional partnerships with churches and parents, the ministry of GEMS Girls' Clubs seeks to help bring girls into a living, growing relationship with Jesus Christ. In its forty-sixth year of ministry, 2004 was a year marked with the greatest growth in clubs for GEMS since years two and three of its history. Within many of the 594 CRC congregations with clubs, GEMS continues to be recognized as one of their most successful outreach ministries. Well over one-third of the 22,000 girls enrolled in clubs come from unchurched homes.

Search for Truth! has been the annual theme studied by girls this year. Learning to read, study, know, and claim God's Word as absolute truth in all areas of their lives was the focus of this counter-culture theme.

Equipping women to be godly role models for girls is a secondary goal for the ministry. In 2004, over 3,400 women (counselors) attended at least one leadership training event offered by GEMS. One of the most valued training events each year is the annual Counselors' Leadership Conference, which was

held in Holland, Michigan, and attracted over 625 women to this 3.5-day conference. Some 45 additional training workshops were offered to counselors in locations all across the United States and Canada.

Large gatherings of five hundred to two thousand girls, called Powerhouses, continued to be offered in multiple locations. The primary focus of Powerhouses is to provide age-appropriate praise and worship opportunities for girls.

In answer to requests from parents, intentional connections with and support to parents has become a new focus for the ministry. Recognizing the all-important role that parents have as the primary faith nurturers of their children, GEMS is designing ways of coming alongside of parents and helping them be successful in that role.

Planning and preparation for the fourth Get Connected! Camp—a life-changing, international, summer camp for early teen girls—was also a part of the main activities of 2004.

The ministry continues to be thankful for the many churches that embrace, value, and support their GEMS counselors and the overall ministry.

GEMS Girls' Clubs
Jan Boone, director

Youth Unlimited

Youth Unlimited (YU) continues to support and care for churches and their youth leaders by providing high-quality and God-enriching programs that change the path of teen's lives for an eternity.

The borders of SERVE and ENCOUNTERS continue to expand throughout the United States, Canada, and the world. Mexico, Jamaica, and Zambia are hosts to those desiring to go to the nations and share the gospel. God has grown YU with the largest capacity in SERVE's history at 2,622 for 2005. An exciting merge of SERVE and ENCOUNTERS will occur in four sites in 2005. These sites will allow for teens to minister at their own developmental levels and gain student leadership opportunities.

Summits in 2005 will occur in Colorado, Alaska, Minnesota, Massachusetts, and British Columbia. These are a time of worship, spiritual growth, and adventure. Teens will be challenged to discover the spiritual gifts God has given them and to execute these gifts in their lives.

Spiritual Emphasis Week (SEW) is used as a tool for churches and schools to come together to support and spiritually care for their students together. During the school day, SEW moves teens into deeper places of worship, growth, and healing within their academic environment. Students and staff embrace this week that focuses them on knowing and worshiping God and our Lord Jesus Christ corporately as well as individually. During the week, meetings with the parents are held to inform them of the events throughout the week as well as to give training and advice to those interested. Meetings are held with the home church staff of the teens. These are a time for discussing current issues within the church and schools, the youth ministries, and any other support and encouragement needed. Teens, in the evening, attend gender-specific talks that include activities to teach them how to live out their lives as God desires with all of the pressures bearing down. Accountability groups are formed that last beyond SEW.

Compass 21 is an effective tool for churches to develop strategies in producing impactful youth ministry. Sites benefit from the development of mission and vision, personal coaching from trained staff, and the creation of a plan to bring the church together to support and grow the youth programming within their congregations.

Youth Unlimited

Rachael Cooley, executive director

STUDY COMMITTEES

Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist

Outline of the report

I. Mandate

A. Introduction

B. Observations re the mandate

II. Recounting of our efforts

A. Introduction

B. Interpretation of the data

III. Report on the data

IV. Summary description of the present context

V. A late observation

VI. Recommendations

VII. Minority report re Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 1

Appendix: Results of Surveys of Councils and Classes

I. Mandate

A. Introduction

Synod 2003 of the Christian Reformed Church appointed a committee to review how well the CRC is living with the decision of 1995 with respect to women serving in the office of minister, elder, and evangelist. The committee was requested to report to Synod 2005. The mandate of the committee was formulated in two parts:

- 1) It is expected that responses will be solicited from congregations and classes for the purpose of reviewing and evaluating the impact of the current regulations of Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a on congregations and classes.
- 2) The committee will make recommendations to Synod 2005 honoring and guided by the declaration of Synod 1995 that

There are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 731)

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 622)

B. Observations re the mandate

By adopting the mandate quoted above, Synod 2003 both guided the methodology for and limited the scope of the present committee. The committee was directed to solicit responses from congregations and classes in order to review and evaluate the impact of current regulations pertaining to the classical-local options for women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and ministry associate. The recommendations of the committee are to be guided by the declaration of 1995 that affirmed that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both honoring Scripture, with respect to women serving in these offices. With this mandate, Synod 2003 appears to have precluded a number of

things. It was not expecting or desiring a review or reassessment of the biblical interpretations or theological principles on which the different positions are based. The mandate did not seek to reopen a broader discussion concerning the issue of women in office. Nor was it open to recommendations that would marginalize either of the two positions that were acknowledged in 1995.

The present committee accordingly pursued its mandate against the background of 1995 and in harmony with the proceedings and results of the study committee that reported to Synod 2000, as well as the guidelines that were adopted by synod at that time. The report of 2000 offered extensive summaries of biblical interpretation to demonstrate both the traditional and the inclusive positions. The evidence was presented there, in parallel format, as a case for closing and for opening to women the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist (now known as ministry associate).

Following the presentation of a case for closing and for opening the offices to women, the 2000 report also included a study of “differences and ecclesiastical unity.” In an attempt to help the church to work through the impasse with respect to women in office, that report returned to a frequently debated question regarding the characterization of this issue. Noting inherent problems with classifying the women in office decision as a confessional, moral, or peripheral (*adiaphora*) matter, the report proposed that it should be characterized instead as a wisdom issue. The committee asserted

Characterizing an issue as a wisdom matter in no way lessens the authority of any passage of Scripture from which the teaching is drawn. But attempting to characterize an issue properly is of genuine help in discerning the area and extent of our differences on the issue. It also helps us to know how to respond appropriately when we reach differing conclusions.

(*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 375)

In that context, a detailed study of biblical directives concerning the ideal of unity offered pastoral advice with regard to freedom of conscience. It encouraged the church to attempt to live together in unity while respecting the diversity of opinion that exists.

The present committee expresses appreciation for the careful and extensive work of that committee. Because an extensive discussion of the biblical texts is presented in the previous report, the present committee did not need to duplicate those studies. The biblical studies published in that report may be recommended to the church for ongoing study and discussion. In keeping with the specific and limiting mandate prescribed by Synod 2003 within the context that has been described briefly here, the present committee has attempted to assess the current situation within the CRC.

II. Recounting of our efforts

In order to fulfill the request to solicit responses from congregations and classes, surveys were distributed to each congregation and classis within the denomination. These surveys were written, distributed, and evaluated with the expert assistance of Dr. Rodger Rice, formerly of the Calvin College Social Research Center (SRC). Translated documents were distributed to the Spanish and Korean communities. An effort was made to design the surveys in such a way that they would offer meaningful comparisons with the data collected approximately five years ago.

Attempting to get a picture that would be as complete and accurate as possible, the committee actively pursued other input as well. Invitations for individual responses were extended in the cover letters sent to church councils. A similar invitation was made by means of *The Banner*. This offered every CRC member the opportunity to convey their thoughts to the study committee. Naturally, it was not possible for the committee to make a personal response to the many individuals who wrote to the committee. However, the input of individuals was much appreciated in determining the denominational pulse. The head of each agency in the CRC was also consulted with a request for feedback as to the way the classical-local option has impacted the ministry of the agencies. Further input was also solicited from women ordained to the ministry of the Word in the CRC. Here, too, the committee expresses appreciation for the candid comments that helped to provide an accurate picture of how the classical-local option is working within the denomination.

III. Report on the data

A. Introduction

Despite reminders and encouragements sent to councils and classes, the level of response to the surveys was somewhat lower than the response five years ago. At that time, the study committee received a returned questionnaire from 77 percent of the councils. This time, of a total of 988 councils surveyed, 515 or 52 percent were completed and returned. This marks a significant decrease in participation at the level of the councils. Of the 47 classes, 36 or 77 percent returned a completed questionnaire. This percentage of returned questionnaires from the classes is down only marginally from the 37 of 47, or 79 percent, that responded five years ago.

Perhaps the decline in the level of responses from councils indicates that some congregations have grown weary of the issue of women in office. It may also indicate that some councils are content to live with things the way they are, or that they judged other matters of ministry to have a higher priority for them than responding to the survey. It is also possible that some did not believe that their response, or failure to respond, would have a significant impact upon future decisions. We note that there appears to have been a lower-than-average response from smaller, newer or emerging, and ethnic minority churches. Whatever the explanation may be for the percentage of nonparticipation, it was the opinion of the committee and Dr. Rice that the level of response was still adequate to give a reliable overview of the current situation within the denomination.

The committee is truly thankful to those classes, councils, and individuals who did respond. Without an adequate level of response and participation from classes, councils, denominational leaders, and individual members, it would have been virtually impossible for the committee to fulfill the mandate established by Synod 2003.

B. Interpretation of the data

The surveys of the councils and classes do not reveal major shifts of thought or practices when compared with the situation reported five years ago on the basis of the survey taken in 1998 in preparation for Synod 2000. The results demonstrate that there are still strongly held differences of opinion within the

denomination with respect to women in office. Nevertheless, there also continues to be an overriding desire to maintain unity within the denomination while respecting the differences of opinion that exist. In the following paragraphs, we highlight some of the data resulting from the surveys and correspondence to validate these conclusions. Readers wishing detailed analyses of the survey results are referred to the appendix. The charts and tables present the results of each question posed to the councils and classes. Comparisons may be drawn with similar data presented in the *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pages 389-407.

Over the past five years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of churches that allow women to serve in all the offices. A similar increase is noted in the number of churches that actually have women currently serving in the various offices. At present, 45 percent of the congregations that responded report having women currently serving in the office of deacon, 23 percent as elder, 1 percent as evangelist, and 3 percent as minister. These numbers may be compared with the presence of women serving in the offices of the responding churches in the survey from 1998. At that time, the survey showed women serving as deacon in 41 percent, elder in 15 percent, evangelist in 1 percent, and minister in 2 percent of the churches that responded.

When asked how it would affect their church if synod were to continue to allow the ordination of women in all offices only as a classical-local option, 50 percent of responding councils currently said it would have little or no effect (see Appendix, Figure 13). Similarly, 50 percent of all responding councils expressed the conviction that our denomination could best honor the decision of 1995 by continuing the classical-local option as is (see Appendix, Figure 16). When given various options, a minority of churches were in favor of removing the restrictions that prohibit women from serving as synodical delegates (11% of the councils), or synodical deputies (2%), or by deleting the word *male* and permitting classes to reintroduce it for their local context (13%). It should be noted that councils were asked to mark only one option; when the three categories just mentioned are combined, 26 percent of the councils indicated that, in their opinion, the denomination could best honor the decision of 1995 by removing present restrictions (see Appendix, Figure 16). Likewise, a minority of churches requested that synod reverse the decision of 1995 that allowed the classical-local option. The latter action was not listed as an option on the questionnaire, but it was written in as a response under "other" by these churches.

One of the goals of the present committee was to give the heads of the various agencies the opportunity to express how the classical-local option may have affected their ministry. The agency leaders generally attested to a lessening of division and an enhanced sense of unity within the denomination since 1995. They observed, with appreciation, that the present framework has provided a context within which the gifts of women can be utilized.

At Calvin Theological Seminary, an atmosphere of respect for differing points of view has been fostered. While differing views are accepted, it is mandatory that open discussions, classroom experiences, and publications are accomplished within the cradle of grace. It is the experience of the field education office that opportunities for women to serve in situations of pulpit supply have increased. However, it is also noted that many churches that have indicated an openness in principle to accept female pastors are in practice

reluctant to follow through with actual invitations to women to preach. At times, churches express a willingness to have either a male or female student for field education placements, but, when a female student arrives, this actually causes a degree of turmoil within the congregation.

A similar experience is attested to by women serving as ordained ministers. Many of the congregations that express support for women in all of the offices of the church do not actually extend calls to women to serve their congregations nor do they extend invitations to women to preach as guests in their services.

Correspondence from some of the ordained female pastors, as well as letters from numerous individuals, asks for a removal of all restrictions and limitations that bar the involvement of women as delegates to classis or synod or that bar them from serving as synodical deputies. At the same time, a majority of the letters received from pastors, councils, and individual members either urge that the classis-local option be left as it is or press for a return to a pre-1995 stance with respect to women in office.

These observations are not intended to suggest that the direction of the denomination should be established on the basis of popular opinion or by the number of letters and communications that are generated by one side or the other. However, these responses do clearly illustrate and underscore the reality of the impasse that the denomination continues to live with.

While the issue of women in office has not been a preoccupation at recent meetings of synod, there, too, the struggle has not been absent. In recent years, discussions with respect to the procedure of approving candidates, whether as a group or individually, attest to the underlying issues that have not yet been resolved.

The tension with which the denomination lives is evident in other ways as well. With respect to drawbacks and disadvantages, 69 percent of the classis surveys suggested that the decision of 1995 to allow the classical-local option was seen as a way of moving the church gradually through “getting used to it” (see Appendix, Figure 22). Likewise, in response to the same question, 53 percent believe the denomination compromised truth and, as a result, members have less trust of the denomination. Forty-four percent believe that the decision has promoted congregationalism. At the same time, 58 percent of the classis surveys indicate that the denomination can best honor the decision of 1995 by continuing the classis-local option (see Appendix, Figure 25). Moreover, 56 percent of the responding classes indicate that the decision of 1995 has had the benefits of allowing women’s gifts to be better utilized while teaching believers to live together in unity with differences (see Appendix, Figure 21).

While tensions clearly exist, there appears to be some movement toward a less divisive situation today than in the past. While 27 percent of the responding churches reported that the whole issue of women in office was divisive in their congregation in the past (see Appendix, Figure 3), there is a decrease to 15 percent of the congregations that reported that it is currently divisive (see Appendix, Figure 4). It is also noteworthy that perceived disadvantages and drawbacks resulting from the decision of 1995 are scored significantly higher in the survey of classes than in the survey of individual congregations (compare figure 22 and figure 6 in the appendix). At the congregational level, it appears that a greater degree of internal divisiveness is present in the mid-sized Anglo churches that have a longer history than in ethnically diverse or

newer churches. Caution must be exercised in interpreting these results, however, due to the percentage of churches that did not respond to the survey.

The diversity of opinion that continues to exist in the denomination serves as a reminder to continue to pray and study together as we seek God's leading and wisdom. Our long-term goal should not be simply to live together by tolerating diversity and compromise but, rather, to find greater harmony through the leading of God's word and Spirit. To that end, we must continue to study this matter diligently. In addition to the biblical discussions presented in previous studies from our own denomination, we have much to learn from others who wrestle with this issue.¹

IV. Summary description of the present context

Our research demonstrates that, across the denomination, the majority would rather live with a degree of tension while maintaining the status quo than enter into another battle over the issue of women in office that might jeopardize the relative peace of the present.

The decision of 1995 to allow women's ordination to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist as a classical-local option has, in the opinion of many, had a mixed effect. On the one hand, it is viewed as a less-than-desirable compromise. On the other hand, it is appreciated for allowing the denomination to maintain a form of unity amidst diversity. The present framework allows both perspectives to coexist in the denomination. It permits proponents of women in office the necessary space to utilize the gifts of women while allowing those congregations and classes not in favor of this move to be minimally affected by it. In general, there has been a gradual lessening of tension and divisiveness over the issue of women in office.

Although the divisiveness of this issue may have decreased somewhat in the denomination, there remains considerable pain in the lives of people across the spectrum of membership. That pain is reflected, for example, in pleas to reverse the decision of 1995. It is equally evident in comments from female ordained pastors and others who find it difficult to live with present restrictions. Some of the ordained women still wonder whether there is really room for them in the CRC.

We observe that despite these and many other expressions of deeply felt pain on both sides of the issue, there has been a genuine attempt to worship and work together in unity. The denomination has attained a degree of equilibrium, with a deep desire to avoid further splintering and with a firm resolve to focus on the various ministries that challenge the church of today. This underlying desire to work together in unity was also evident within the present study committee. There was a spirit of cooperation, of genuinely

¹ To foster the ongoing dialogue, the committee wishes to call attention to the following materials for study and discussion. Works that support the inclusive position: Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985); Richard Krueger Clark and Catherine Clark Krueger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992); Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003). Works that support the traditional position: Dan Doriani, *Women and Ministry: What the Bible Teaches* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003); J. Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995).

listening to each other, and of being able to disagree without disrespecting the viewpoints of others.

The Christian Reformed Church, in the area of women in office, is working at peacekeeping, peacemaking, and forbearance. The church and its members ought to be thanked for exercising grace and love in this issue. We have learned to live together.

V. A late observation

Included in the *Acts of Synod 2004*, published at about the time when the present study committee was completing its work, are decisions pertaining to the synodical process for approving candidates (pp. 540-41). As a supporting ground for the decision to vote on each candidate individually, it was suggested, “This very issue will most likely be dealt with by Synod 2005—when synod revisits other issues regarding women in office” (p. 541). Although the study committee was unable to deal extensively with this issue, it judged that a few observations are in order, both to call attention to the procedure followed in 2004 as well as to highlight principles that should guide future decisions.

In keeping with the previously established principle of recognizing and attempting to honor two positions in the denomination with respect to women’s ordination, Synod 2004 returned to the procedure of approving candidates for the ministry individually rather than as a group. This allowed delegates who do not agree with the ordination of women to abstain from voting for female candidates. At the time of voting, advice was expressed to delegates by the officers of synod that if they considered gender to be the deciding factor in how they would vote, they were encouraged to abstain rather than vote no. For all candidates, male and female, final vote counts were not made public. Once a clear majority voting yes was attained, that candidate was declared approved, and voting on the next candidate proceeded.

The study committee suggests that the occasion of the approval of candidates at synod is not the most appropriate time or forum for discussions about women in office. The vote on the approval of candidates ought to focus upon whether the prospective candidates have met the denomination’s requirements.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Howard Vanderwell (chair), Dr. William Koopmans (reporter), and Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins for the discussion of this report.

B. That synod encourage the churches to make use of the gifts of women, including invitations to ordained women to preach and licensed women to exhort in those congregations where it is permitted.

Grounds:

1. Although previous synods have already urged councils and classes to make use of the gifts of women, the use of the gifts of all the church’s members is of such significance for the healthy ministry and fellowship of all congregations that this encouragement warrants repeating.
2. It is the experience of some women that even churches that in principle support women’s ordination are in practice hesitant to make full use of women’s gifts.

C. That synod express gratitude for the efforts of the churches to live together in harmony and peace amidst evident pain and strongly differing convictions.

Ground: Expressions of unity and peace within the church should be gratefully acknowledged and appreciated (Eph. 4:1-6, Rom. 15:5-6, Col. 3:15).

D. That ordination and installation forms be reviewed to make the language gender inclusive.

Ground: Making available gender-inclusive language on forms is consistent with the denomination's position that allows women's ordination as a local option.

E. That synod support ongoing educational efforts by:

1. Asking the BOT to prepare for publication a booklet that includes excerpts from the report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000, particularly the biblical summaries (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 351-407, especially pp. 356-83).
2. Asking the BOT to post on the denominational website the material mentioned above.
3. Encouraging classes to provide a forum for the study of this material.
4. Encouraging church councils to study this material and recommend its inclusion in their adult education ministry.

Grounds:

1. The diversity of conviction that exists on this issue illustrates the need to continue together in a spirit of humility to seek God's wisdom and leading.
2. Ongoing dialogue and interaction concerning this issue is necessary to build respect for the views of others.
3. Our denomination can benefit from the study of sources both from within the CRC and from the broader Christian community.

F. That synod revise Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 4, to read as follows:

If a local congregation, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, desires to call and ordain a female pastor or ministry associate, the council may declare an exception to Church Order Article 3-a to allow the church to proceed. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in a candidate's examination or in processing ministerial credentials. Examinations for ordination of female members in a classis in which the word *male* in Article 3-a has not been declared inoperative may be conducted by a *classis contracta* of churches that do not object. In the event that a quorum cannot be found, a neighboring classis in which the word *male* has been declared inoperative may be asked to conduct the examination. The classis to which the congregation belongs is to decide whether the female pastor may be delegated to classis by way of exception.

Grounds:

1. This provision would make women's ordination to all offices a local option for all congregations.
2. These guidelines establish a process of examination that respects the right to abstain for those who are not in favor of women's ordination.

G. That synod revisit the issue of female delegates to synod at such a time when a majority of classes has declared the word *male* inoperative.

Grounds:

1. To date, fewer than half of the classes (46%) have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative.
2. Close to half of the classes have declared the word *male* inoperative.
3. The results of the survey of councils clearly favor not removing the current restrictions on the delegation of females to synod.
4. A provision at the present time to send female delegates to synod might create a considerable strain in the denomination.

Note: A minority of the committee is proposing a different recommendation with respect to delegating women to synod (Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, 1). Please see their recommendation at the end of this report.

H. That synod revise Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 2, to read as follows:

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

Ground: Such a regulation would facilitate the use of the gifts of female ministers as synodical deputies while respecting the right of neighboring classes to choose to be served by male deputies.

I. That synod declare the work of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist completed.

Committee to Review the Classical-Local
Options with Respect to Women Serving in the
Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist

Stephanie Baker Collins

Helen T. Brent

David H. Engelhard, ex officio

Neil Jasperse

Jonathan Kim

William Koopmans, reporter

Bruce Persenaire

Eleanor Rietkerk

Bonnie Smith

Howard Vanderwell, chair

VII. Minority report re Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 1

Rather than suggesting that synod revisit in the future the issue of women delegates to synod, a minority of the committee recommends revising Recommendation G of the majority report regarding Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, Regulation 1 to read:

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate has the right to delegate women officebearers to synod.

Grounds:

1. Synod permits the difference in understanding of the relevant biblical material on the women-in-office issue to be expressed by allowing ordination at the classical-local level. A consistent classical-local option would allow those classes who have declared the word *male* inoperative to delegate women to synod.
2. A significant number of classes, a number now approaching half of the denomination's classes, have declared the word *male* inoperative and are restricted in carrying out that declaration when it comes to synodical delegation. Their classical decision on this issue is not honored at the denominational level.
3. The presence of women as advisers to synod, as an alternative to delegation, restricts their role at the institutional denominational level in that they are unable to participate in decision-making through voting and fails to reflect the reality that women are serving in local settings as elders and ministers of the Word.

The minority committee wishes to note that it supports the majority report, apart from Recommendation G.

Minority Committee for Regulation 1
Stephanie Baker Collins
Helen Brent
Eleanor Rietkerk
Bonnie Smith

Appendix Results of Surveys of Councils and Classes

I. Survey of councils

A. *Return rate*

Of a total of 988 congregations, the councils of 515 or 52 percent returned a completed questionnaire.

B. Results of the 2004 survey

Figure 1—Q. 1: In what ordained offices are women currently serving in your congregation?

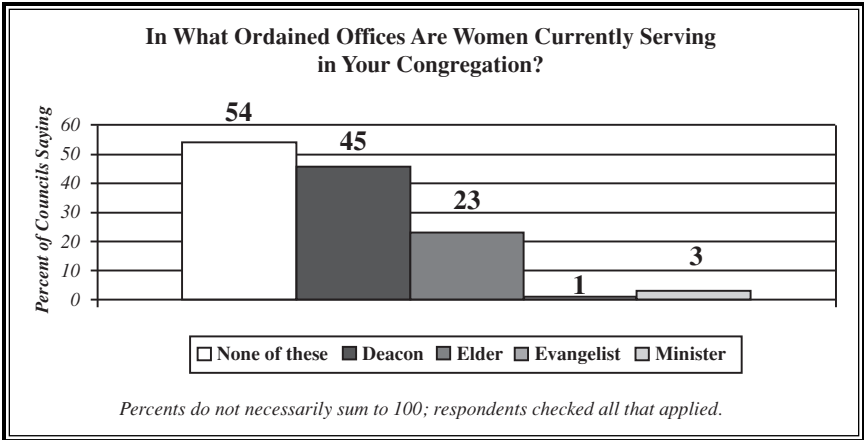


Figure 2—Q. 2: In what ordained offices are women allowed to serve in your congregation?

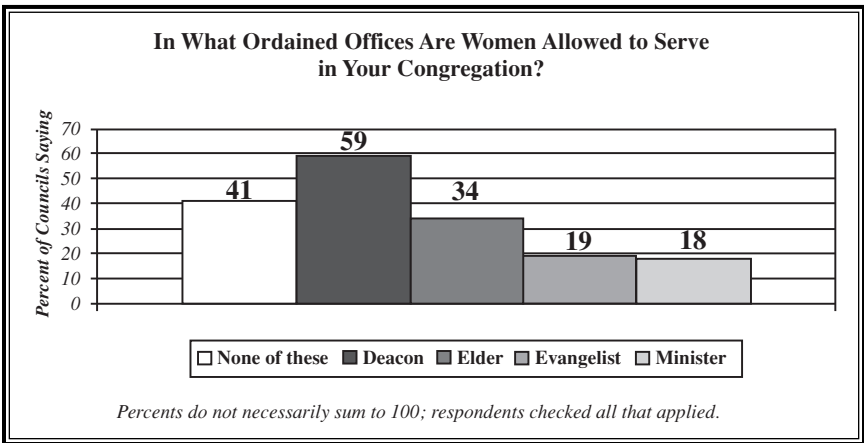


Figure 3—Q. 3: How *has* the whole issue regarding women in office affected your congregation?

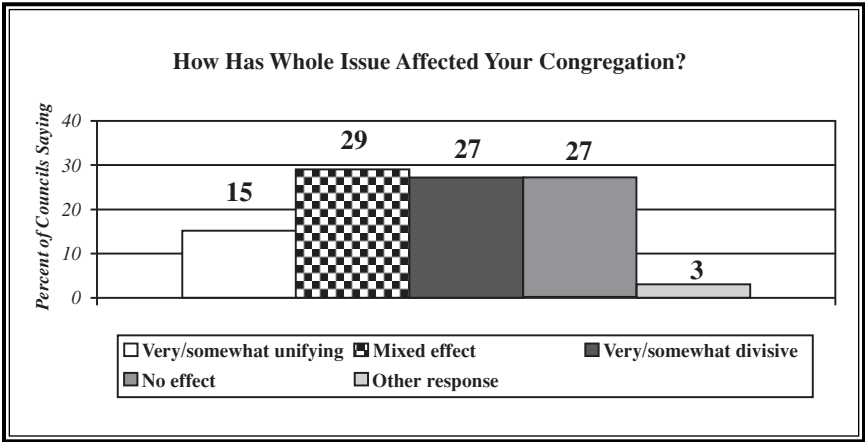


Figure 4—Q. 4: How *is* the whole issue regarding women in office *currently* affecting your congregation?

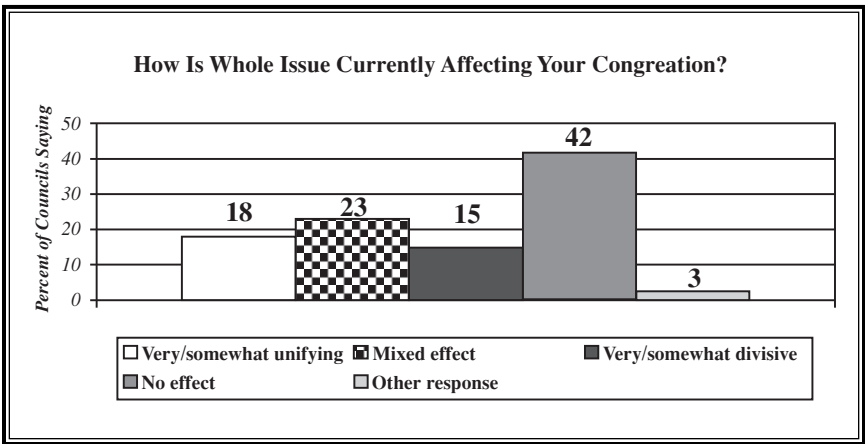


Figure 5—Q. 5: Please identify benefits and advantages for your church that resulted from the decision of Synod 1995.

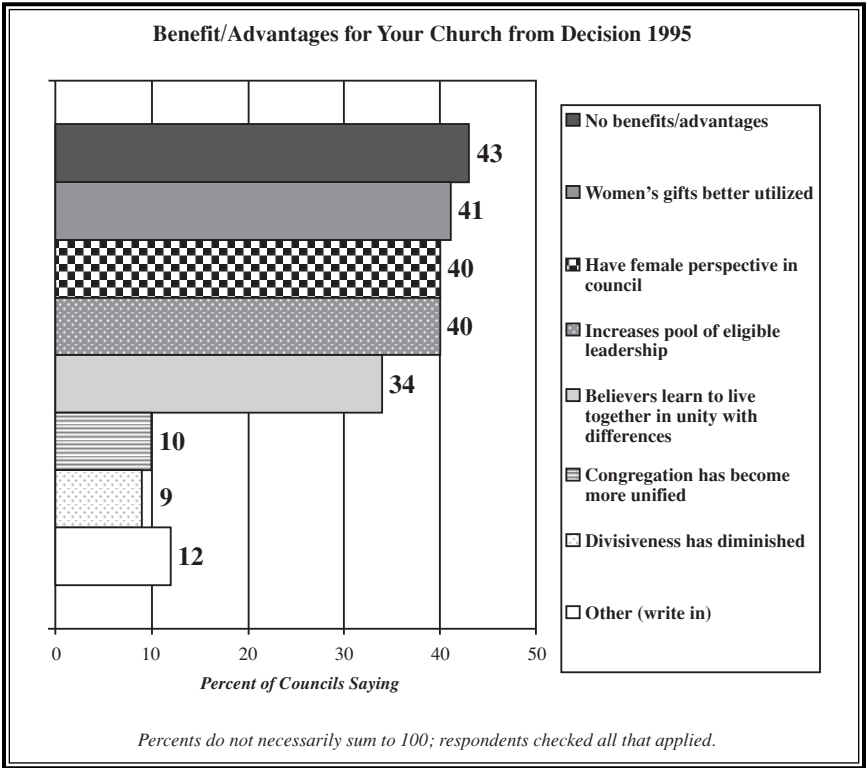


Figure 6—Q. 6: Please identify drawbacks and disadvantages for your church that resulted from the decision of Synod 1995.

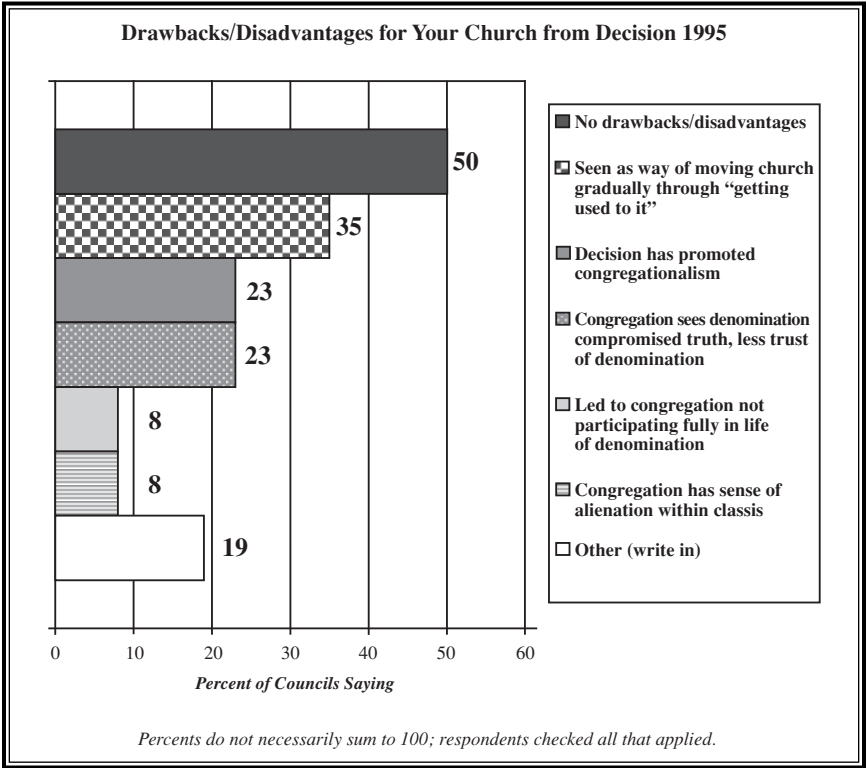


Figure 7—Q. 7: How has the specific decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office affected your congregation?

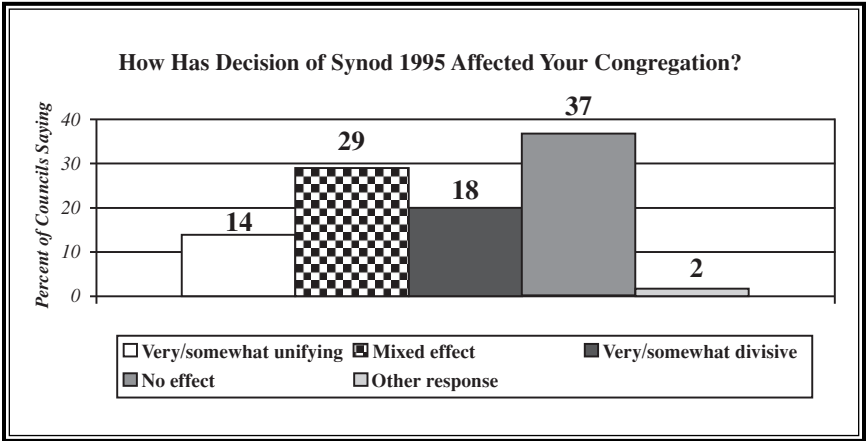


Figure 8—Q. 8: How is the decision of Synod 1995 now perceived in your congregation?

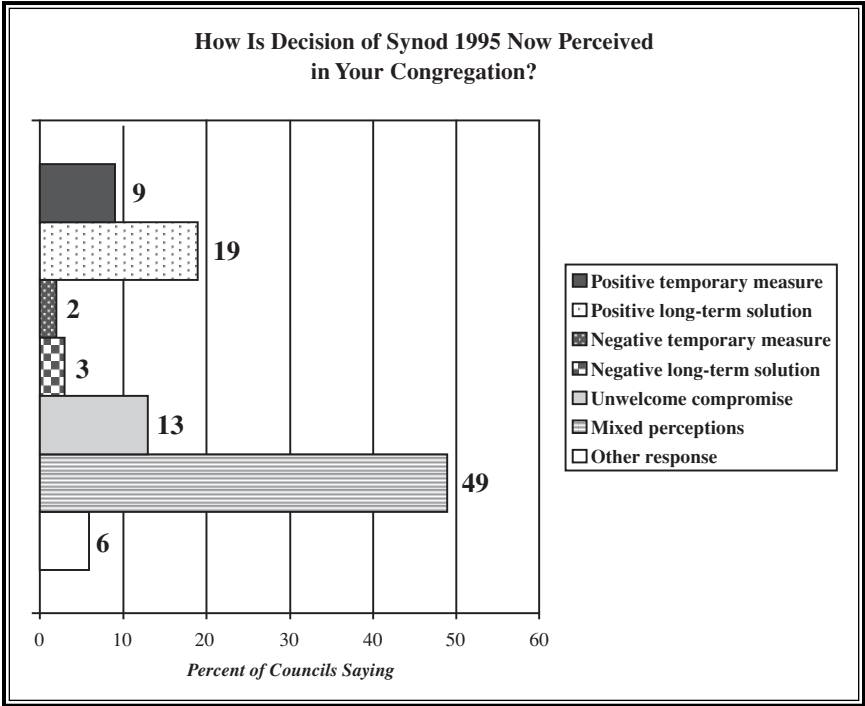


Figure 9—Q. 9: How has Synod 1995’s decision regarding women in office affected the general attitude of your congregation toward the CRC?

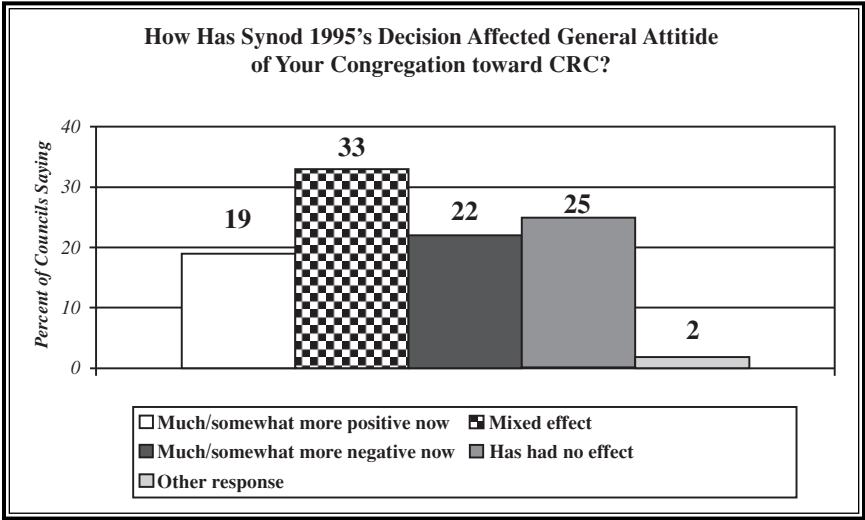


Figure 10—Q. 10: How has Synod 1995’s decision regarding women in office affected the general attitude of your congregation *toward your classis*?

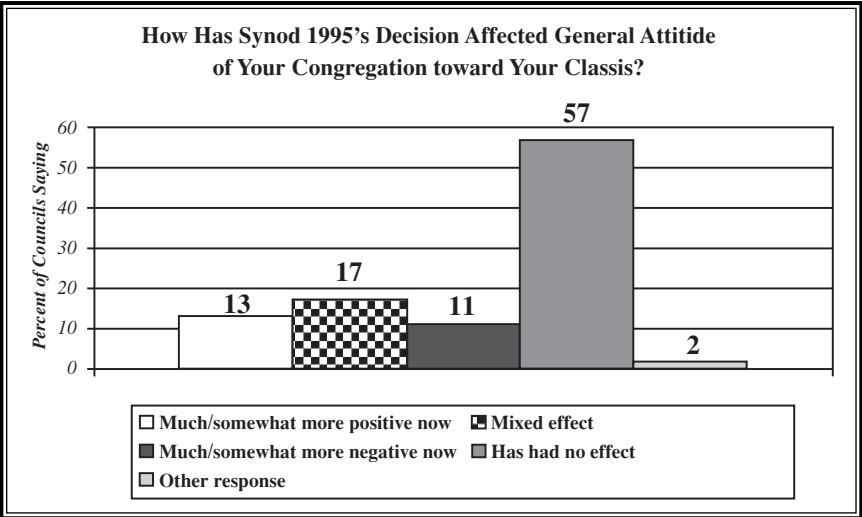


Figure 11—Q. 11-a: What course has your classis taken with respect to Synod 1995’s decision to allow a classical-local option to declare the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative?

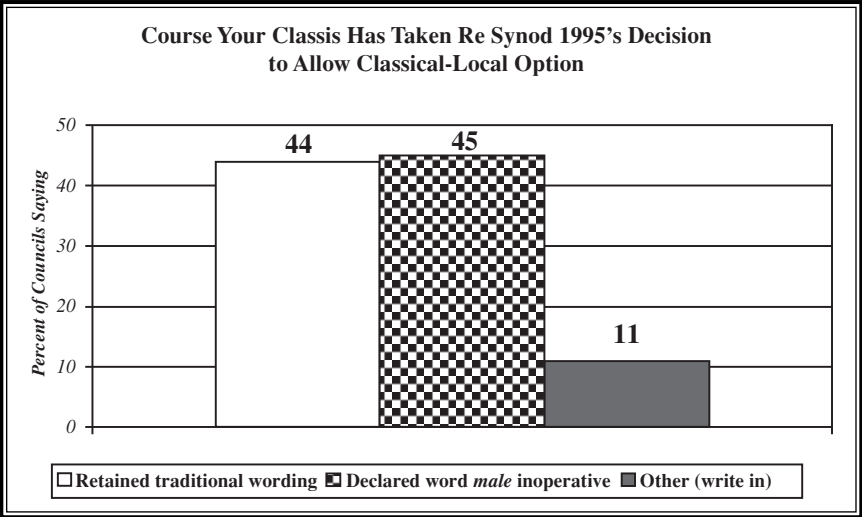


Figure 12—Q. 11-b: How does your church view the actions of your classis on this issue?

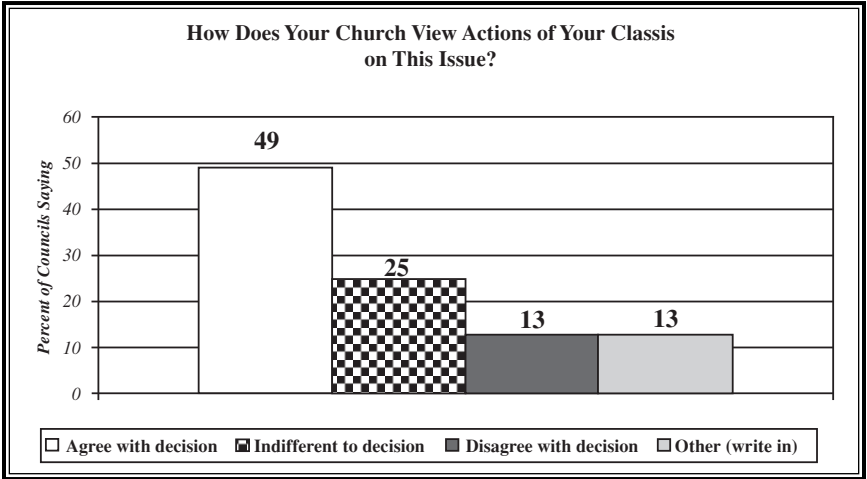


Figure 13—Q. 12: If synod were to continue to allow the ordination of women in all offices *only as a classical-local option*, how would this affect your church?

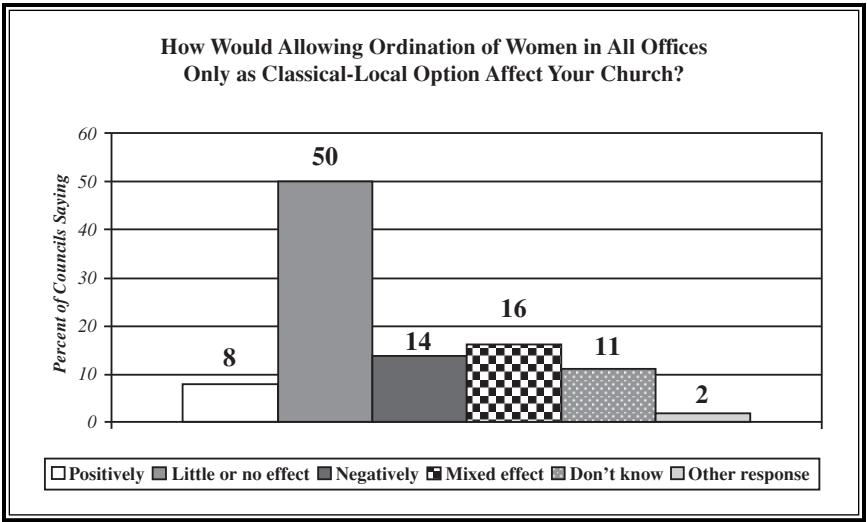


Figure 14—Q. 13: Suppose that synod were to allow, within the classical-local option, that women may be delegated to synod and classes. How would this affect your church?

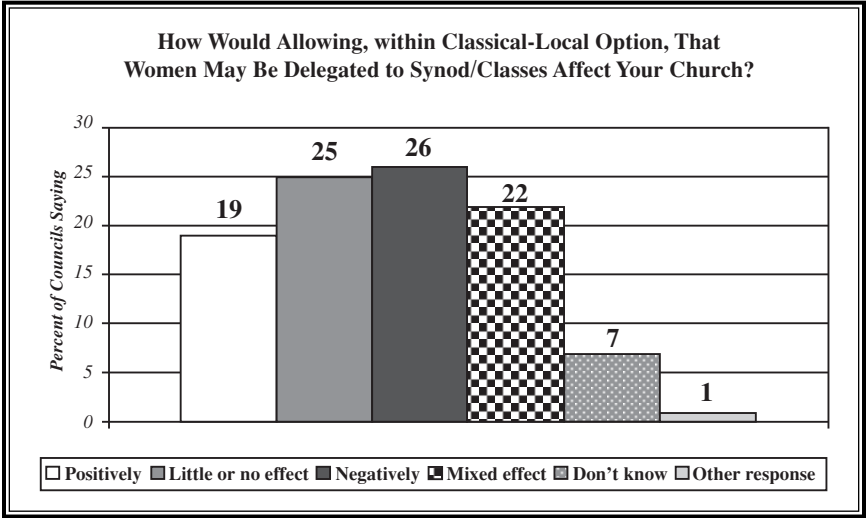


Figure 15—Q. 14: Suppose synod were to reverse the present status quo by restricting women from serving as elders, evangelists, and ministers only in those churches or classes that have exercised an option to impose such a restriction. This implies that synod would delete the word *male* from the Church Order but councils and classes could exercise the right to reintroduce it for their local context. *How would this affect your church?*

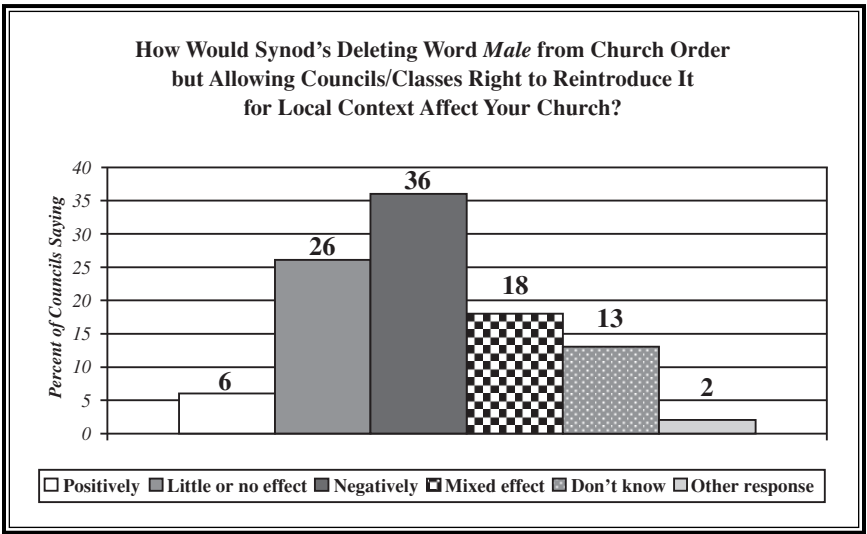
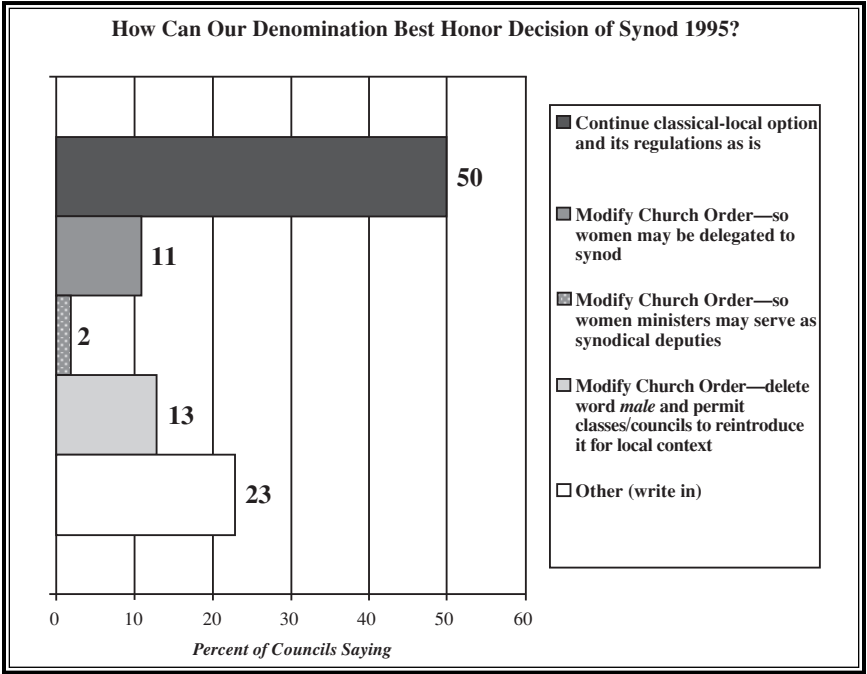


Figure 16—Q. 15: How do you as a council believe that our denomination can best honor the decision of Synod 1995?



C. Comparison of councils returning questionnaire to all congregations surveyed

Table 1: Membership Size and Return Rate

Total Number of Members of Congregation	% of all congregations	% of responding councils	Return rate
150 or fewer	39	26	35%
151-300	24	28	61%
301-600	28	35	65%
601 or more	10	12	63%
Total	100	100	52%
(n)	(988)	(515)	—

Table 2: Predominant Ethnicity and Return Rate

Predominant Ethnicity of Congregation	% of all congregations	% of responding councils	Return rate
Anglo	77	89	60%
Ethnic minority/multiethnic	22	10	25%
Not indicated	2	1	29%
Total	100	100	52%
(n)	(988)	(515)	—

Table 3: Status of Congregation and Return Rate

Status of Congregation	% of all congregations	% of responding councils	Return rate
Emerging	16	6	20%
Organized	84	94	58%
Total	100	100	52%
(n)	(988)	(515)	—

Table 4: Year Organized (*Organized Congregations Only*) and Return Rate

Year congregation organized	% of all organized congregations	% of responding councils	Return rate
Prior to 1946	29	34	68%
1946-1984	50	53	61%
1985 or later	21	13	37%
Total	100	100	58%
(n)	(834)	(484)	—

Table 5: Country and Return Rate

Country of congregation	% of all congregations	% of responding councils	Return rate
United States	75	72	50%
Canada	25	28	60%
Total	100	100	52%
(n)	(988)	(515)	—

Table 6: Classis and Return Rate

Classis	Classis ID#	#Con- gregations	# Returned	% Returned
Alberta North	03	29	20	69
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	06	20	12	60
Arizona	07	10	7	70
Atlantic Northeast	08	16	6	38
British Columbia North-West	09	18	13	72
British Columbia South-East	10	23	11	48
California South	15	26	4	15
Central California	18	33	15	45
Chatham	21	27	16	59
Chicago South	27	20	14	70
Columbia	28	17	5	29
Eastern Canada	30	22	11	50
Georgetown	44	19	13	68
Grand Rapids East	33	16	9	56
Grand Rapids North	39	22	15	68
Grand Rapids South	36	21	8	38
Grandville	42	18	7	39
Greater Los Angeles	43	40	15	38
Hackensack	45	21	10	48
Hamilton	48	17	6	35
Heartland	75	18	9	50
Holland	51	32	21	66
Hudson	54	15	5	33
Huron	55	21	15	71
Iakota	87	22	15	68
Illiana	56	24	11	46
Kalamazoo	57	20	9	45
Lake Erie	60	22	13	59
Lake Superior	63	33	18	55
Minnkota	66	14	9	64
Muskegon	69	21	14	67
Niagara	71	13	9	69
Northcentral Iowa	72	14	9	64
Northern Illinois	24	20	10	50
Northern Michigan	12	16	9	56
Pacific Hanmi	76	20	3	15
Pacific Northwest	78	37	12	32
Pella	81	22	18	82
Quinte	82	19	10	53
Red Mesa	83	17	4	24
Rocky Mountain	84	28	17	61
Southeast U.S.	32	21	11	52
Thornapple Valley	89	12	8	67
Toronto	90	23	13	57
Wisconsin	93	19	10	53
Yellowstone	95	10	2	20
Zeeland	96	20	14	70
Totals	—	988	515	52

II. Survey of classes

A. Return rate

Of a total of 47 classes, 36 or 77 percent returned a completed questionnaire.

B. Results of the 2004 survey

Figure 17—Q. 1: How has the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office affected your classis?

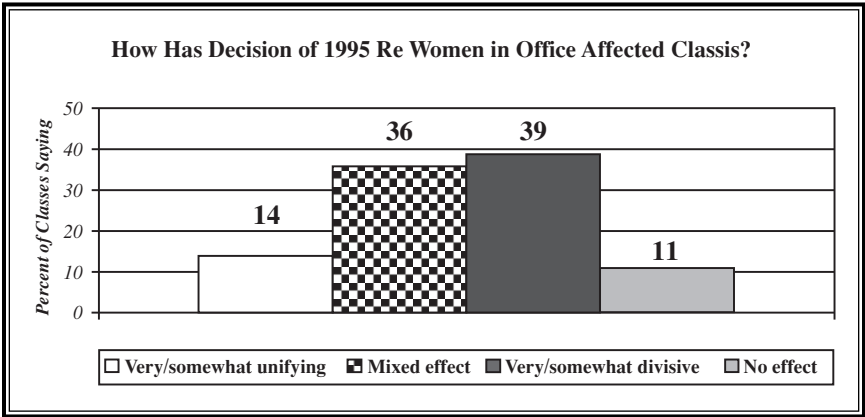


Figure 18—Q. 2: Has your classis declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a?

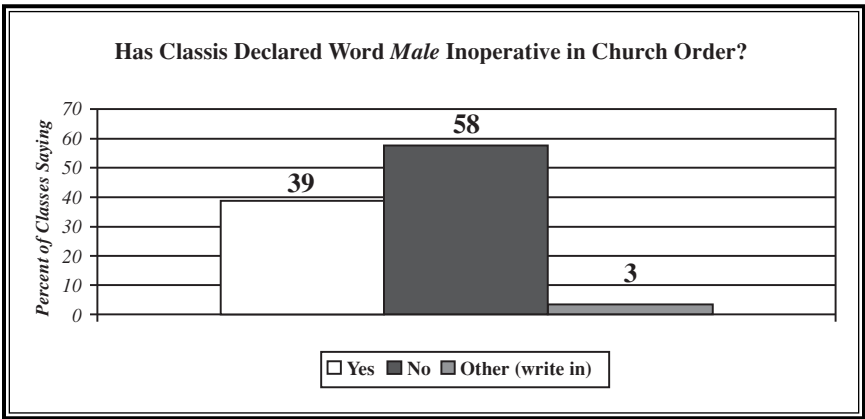


Figure 19—Q. 3: In your classis, are women allowed to be seated as deacon, elder, or minister delegates?

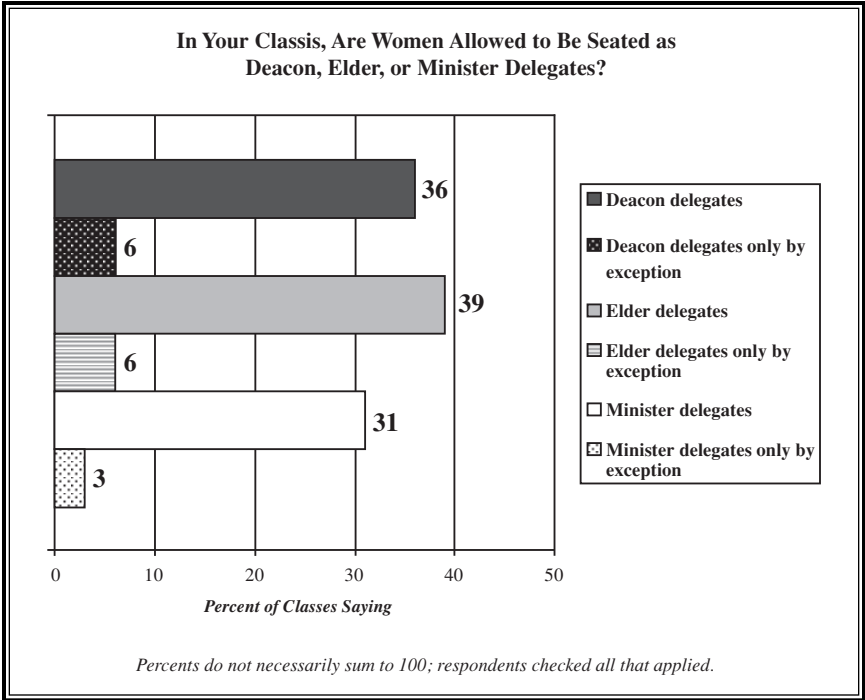


Figure 20—Q. 4: Is the decision of your classis whether or not to seat female delegates currently a divisive or unifying factor?

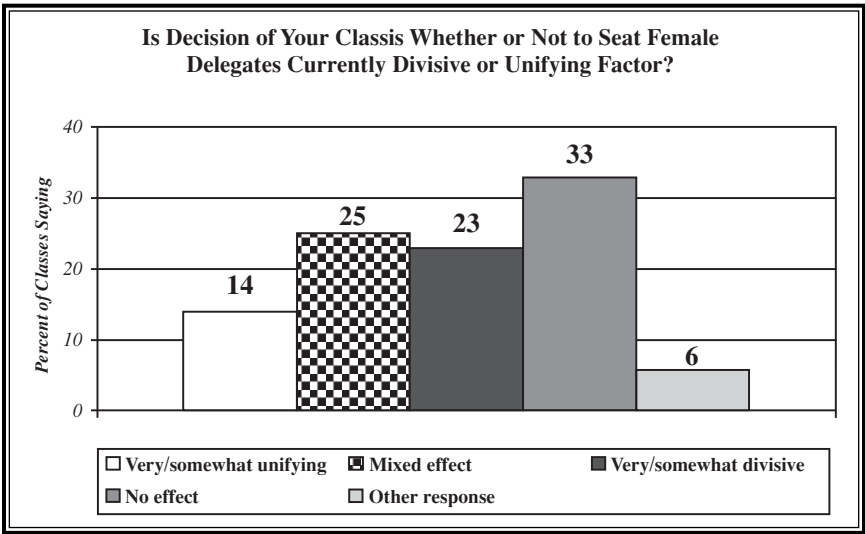


Figure 21—Q. 5: Please identify benefits and advantages for your classis that resulted from the decision of Synod 1995.

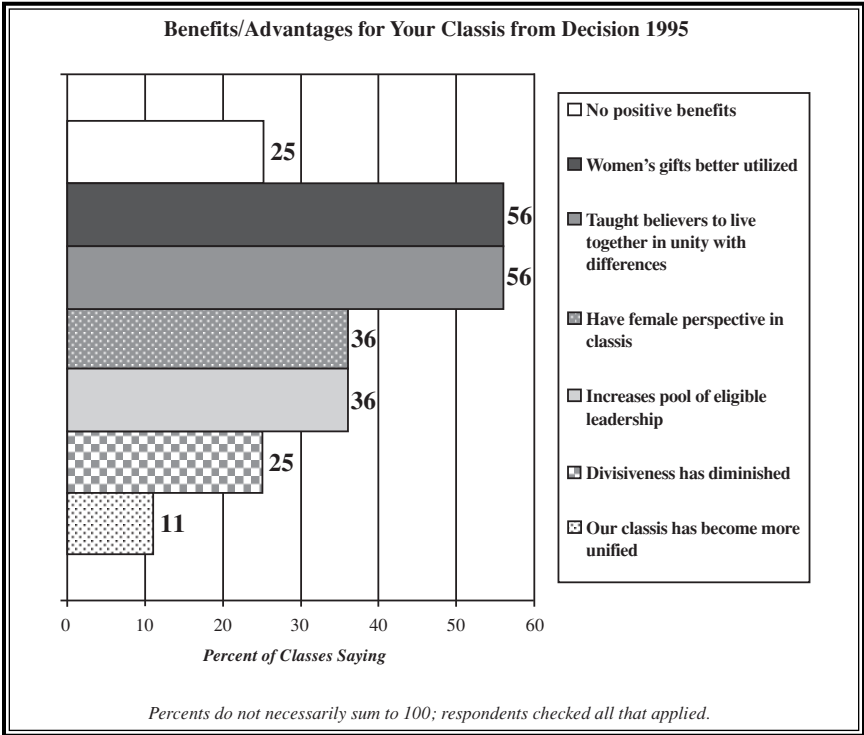


Figure 22—Q. 6: Please identify drawbacks and disadvantages for your classis that resulted from the decision of Synod 1995.

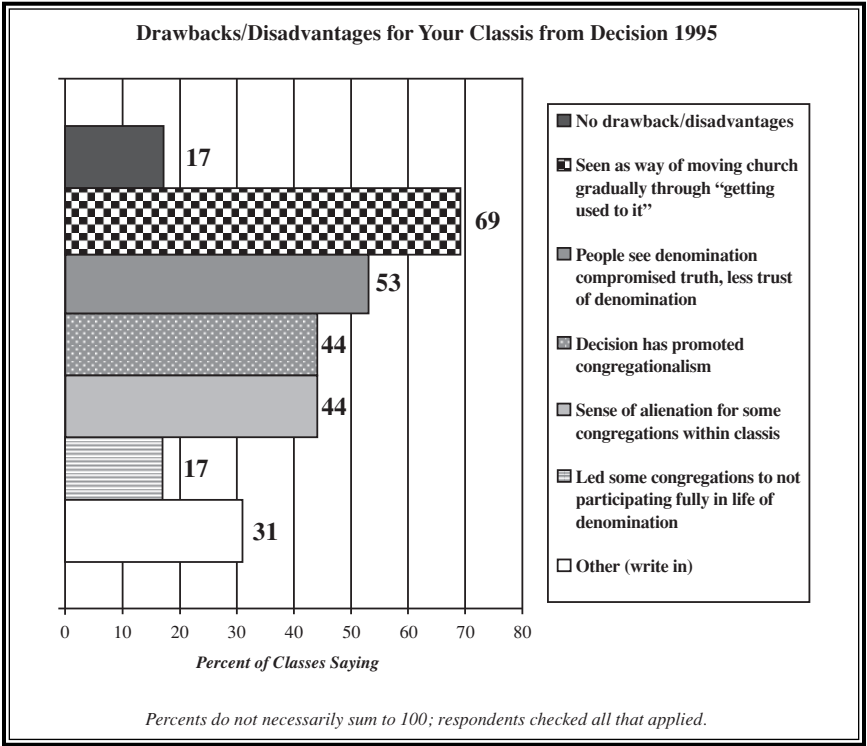


Figure 23—Q. 7: If synod were to decide to continue to allow the ordination of women in all offices *only as a classical-local option*, how would this affect your classis?

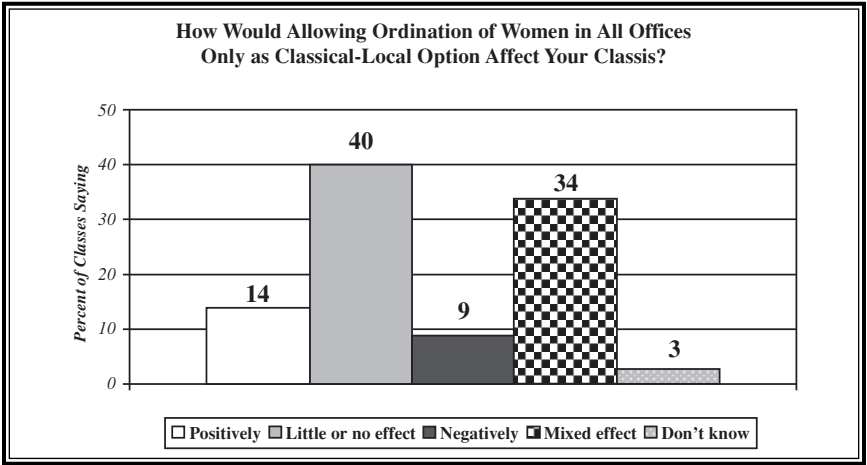


Figure 24—Q. 8: Suppose synod were to reverse the present status quo by restricting women from serving as elders, evangelists, and ministers only in churches or classes that have exercised a classical-local option to impose that restriction. This implies that synod would delete the word *male* from the Church Order but councils and classes could exercise the right to reintroduce it for their local context. *How would this affect your classis?*

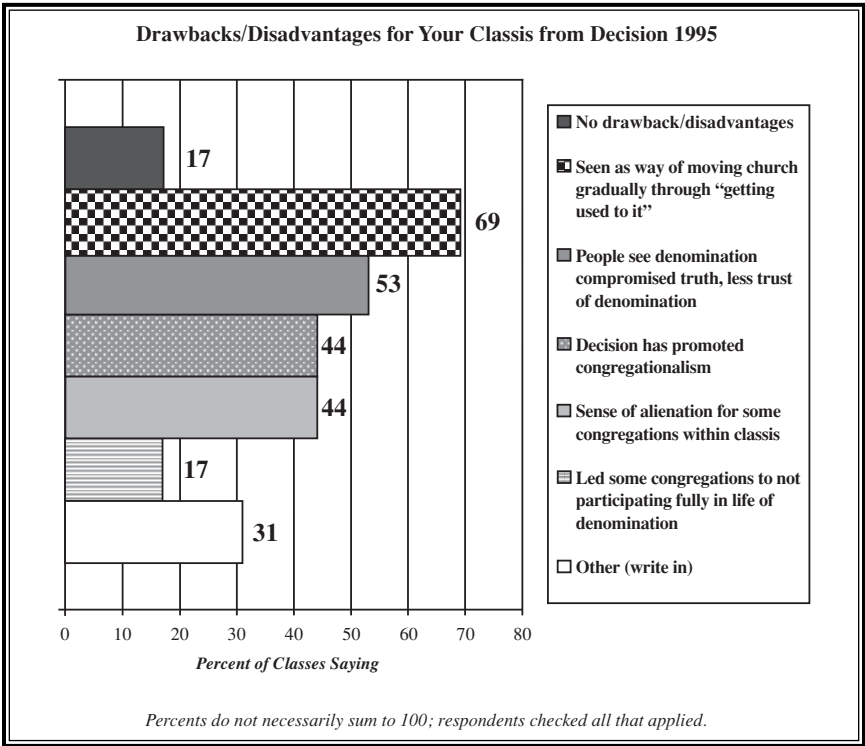
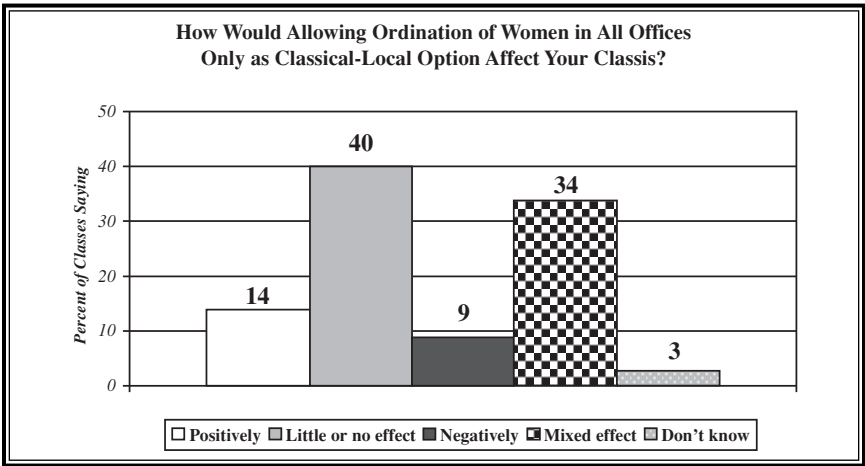


Figure 25—Q. 9: How do you as a classis believe that our denomination can best honor the decision of Synod 1995?



Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod

I. Introduction

A. *Mandate from Synod 2003*

In response to an overture, Synod 1995 decided to appoint up to seven members from various ethnic communities in the denomination to serve as advisers to synod for a period of five years. Synod 2000 noted that no provision had been made to review this practice at the end of those five years and decided to continue the practice for an additional five years with the expectation that Synod 2003 would appoint a committee to review the practice and report to Synod 2005. Synod 2003 appointed a nine-member committee that reflected the ethnic diversity of the denomination and instructed it:

- 1) To evaluate this practice according to the original grounds as stated by Synod 1995 (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 30-31).
- 2) To determine whether the practice encourages mutual enrichment, that is, that it is not only for the benefit of advisers and the communities they represent but is also, and perhaps more importantly, for the benefit of the whole church.
- 3) To gather information from at least the following respondents: past ethnic advisers, synod officers, advisory committee chairpersons and other delegates, minority and other appropriate churches, classes, and denominational officers.
- 4) To recommend to Synod 2005 whether to continue the practice of appointing ethnic advisers and /or to suggest any modification of that practice.

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 622)

May our gracious God guide our councils, classes, and Synod 2005 as they consider this report and as our denomination continues its efforts to be one in which people from all nations joyfully worship and serve our Savior.

B. *Background to the mandate: Synods 1994 and 1995*

1. Synod 1994

Synod 1994 discussed the size of the Pastoral Ministries board, a new board that would supervise the Chaplain Committee, the Committee on Disability Concerns, the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR), the Pastor-Church Relations Committee, and the Synodical Committee on Abuse Prevention. The denominational Board of Trustees recommended that this new board consist of fifteen members. Three of the above-mentioned committees appealed that decision, asking instead for a twenty-five member board. The discussion especially emphasized how a smaller board would not give ethnic minorities an opportunity to participate as was currently possible with SCORR's larger board. Synod did not sustain the appeal. The same synod also defeated a motion to permit CRC Home Missions to add to its board two members-at-large for urban and /or multiethnic ministry.

2. Synod 1995

Synod 1995 received an overture noting that at Synod 1994 "both efforts to enlarge minority participation by increasing board sizes were defeated" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 395). The overture also noted that "at Synod

1994, there was one delegate who is African American; there was one who is Hispanic; there was one Asian. There were 181 other delegates who are white, most of them Dutch."

The overture asked synod to "include a minimum of ten members from the various ethnic communities in the CRC to serve as advisers to synod. Their function will be to help synod be alert to the perspectives of the nations. They will attend plenary sessions of synod and be assigned to each of the advisory committees of synod, where they will have the privilege of the floor but will not vote" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 395).

The grounds of the overture noted that several denominational boards had "expressly stated their desire to include minorities," and contended that "attendance and participation at synod and on its advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from the nations to become so conversant with CRC policies and practices that delegation to synod and/or appointment to boards will be quickly forthcoming" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 395-96).

Synod responded to the overture by deciding to include

up to seven members from the various ethnic communities in the CRC to serve as advisers to synod and that the Board of Trustees be asked to implement this practice for a period of five years.

Grounds:

1. The CRC is a multiethnic church but has had minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates.
2. Several of the ethnic communities of the CRC have repeatedly stated that they yearn to be at the table of policy and decision making at the synodical level.
3. Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.
4. The presence of ethnic advisers would be affirming for delegates to synod from the various ethnic communities.
5. Attendance and participation at synod and on synodical advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.
6. This practice affirms a sense of CRC "ownership" by various ethnic communities.
7. Should the practice prove counterproductive to the intended aims, it can be discontinued.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 694-95)

II. Gathering information

A. Survey design and administration

Our mandate asked us to gather information from a number of respondents. We sent survey questionnaires to the seven respondent groups listed in Table 1. Dr. Rodger Rice of Calvin College assisted us in designing these surveys and in summarizing and analyzing the response data. Some survey questions were common to all seven questionnaires, and each survey contained questions specific to the person or group being surveyed. For the councils of congregations that are not ethnic minority or multiethnic, we posted a survey questionnaire on the denominational website. An e-mail was sent to pastors informing them of this survey and inviting them to complete it. Pertinent sections of the surveys are discussed in this report, and copies of the complete surveys will be given to the advisory committee considering this report.

Because our committee was particularly interested in responses from those who had served as ethnic advisers or as ethnic minority synodical delegates, a follow-up postcard was sent to these two groups. In addition, all ethnic advisers who had not returned their surveys after two contacts by mail were personally contacted by the study committee and urged to send in their surveys.

We also requested information from two leaders in six classes, not including Pacific Hanmi, that consistently delegate ethnic minorities to synod. In addition, we secured information from all congregations in the classis of one of our committee members to determine how many ethnic minorities were currently serving as officebearers.

B. Survey return rate

Table 1 shows the return rate of the surveys. Even though trends of opinions were obvious in the responses received, we were disappointed at the low return rates that in all cases were lower than 50 percent before we personally contacted ethnic advisers.

We were especially disappointed that the return rate was not higher from the ethnic minority synodical delegates and from the councils of ethnic minority or multiethnic congregations. A partial explanation for the low return from ethnic minority synodical delegates is that some people received multiple surveys because they served in multiple capacities over the years. For example, they served as an ethnic adviser, as an ethnic minority synodical delegate, and currently serve an ethnic minority congregation. Thus, they received three surveys, but some returned only one.

There may be a couple of reasons for the low return rate from the councils of ethnic minority and/or multiethnic congregations. First, the return rate on surveys that are completed by groups such as committees and councils, rather than individuals, is typically lower. Second, a number of surveys returned by councils of ethnic minority and/or multiethnic congregations indicated that they did not know what ethnic advisers were and had no idea that the position existed. Other councils may have not completed the survey for the same reason.

Table 1: Survey respondent groups and return rates

Survey Group	Surveys Sent	Surveys Returned	Return Rate
Ethnic Advisers	31	17	55%
Ethnic Minority Synodical Delegates	86	18	21%
Agency Directors & Board Presidents	48	21	44%
Synodical Officers & Advisory Committee			
Chairs & Reporters	136	54	40%
Classical Interim/Ministry Committees	47	21	45%
Councils of Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic Congregations	220	34	15%
Councils of Congregations not Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic	757	19	3%

III. Evaluation of the grounds used for the appointment of ethnic advisers

Our mandate calls us to evaluate each of the grounds Synod 1995 used to appoint ethnic advisers.

A. *Ground 1:* The CRC is a multiethnic church but has had minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates.

As the 1995 overture indicated, at Synod 1994 only three of synod’s 184 delegates were ethnic minorities. This represented 1.6 percent of the delegates. In 1995, the year ethnic advisers were approved, there were six ethnic minority delegates (3.3 percent). The same number of ethnic minority delegates was present at Synod 1996 when ethnic advisers began serving. In 1997, there were twelve ethnic minority delegates (6.5 percent). Four of these came from Pacific Hanmi, a newly formed Korean classis that would enrich synod with four ethnic minority delegates each year it sent a full delegation. Since 1997, the number of ethnic minority delegates has ranged from twelve to eighteen delegates.

Table 2: Number of Ethnic Minority Synodical Delegates from 1994 to 2004

Year	Number of ethnic minority synod delegates	Percentage of ethnic minority delegates to synod’s total number of delegates
1994	3	1.6
1995	6	3.3
1996	6	3.3
1997	12	6.4
1998	17	9.0
1999	18	9.6
2000	16	8.5
2001	14	7.4
2002	12	6.4
2003	18	9.6
2004	12	6.4

No longer can it be said that our denomination has only minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates. Part of the reason for this increase is due to the formation of Pacific Hanmi and part seems to be due to the response of some classes to synod’s encouragement to delegate ethnic minorities. A small part of this increase is due to the appointment of ethnic advisers. Four of the ethnic advisers, 24 percent of the 17 respondents, said they had served as a synodical delegate after they had served as an ethnic adviser. As a result of all these factors, the delegation of ethnic minorities to synod has increased.

In December 2002, our Race Relations agency estimated that 5.8 to 7.4 percent of our members are ethnic minorities. Thus, in the last eight years (1997-2004), ethnic minorities have been represented at synod at a level equal to or greater than the percentage of ethnic minorities in the denomination. If this level of representation is acceptable, there is no need to continue the position of ethnic adviser.

However, we must ask: Is this level of representation acceptable? Is the presence of 12-18 ethnic minorities among 188 delegates sufficient to present perspectives that the body needs to hear? Is the number large enough so the many ethnic communities in the denomination are represented? Is the number large enough to create a “critical mass” so ethnic minorities do not feel overwhelmed by the Anglo majority?

1. Observation 1

In 1996, the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God indicated that the ethnic minority membership of our denomination was estimated at 5 percent compared to national averages between 20 and 25 percent (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 216).

A question to ask ourselves is: Should the percentage of ethnic minorities at synod mirror the denomination or the society around us?

2. Observation 2

Of our 1002 congregations, 163 identify themselves as ethnic and another fifty-six identify themselves as multiethnic. This represents 22 percent of our congregations.

Therefore, two questions to ask ourselves are:

- Should the percentage of ethnic minorities at synod be calculated in relationship to the total number of synodical delegates or to the total number of ethnic minority and /or multiethnic congregations? Can we be satisfied if 6.4 to 9.6 percent of our synodical delegates are ethnic minorities or should we be closer to 22 percent?
- Would the presence of a greater percentage of ethnic minority members at synod stimulate more intentional ministry to the ethnic minority communities of our nations?

These are important questions to ask now and will become increasingly important because, for the United States at least, the U.S. Census Bureau is projecting that by 2050 nonwhites will be 52.3 percent of the total U.S. population.

3. Observation 3

The response of the majority of our 47 classes to the repeated encouragements of synod to delegate ethnic minorities to synod has been minimal or nonexistent.

Consider the following:

- Since Synod 1996, the year ethnic advisers began serving, through 2004 only 19 of our 47 classes have delegated ethnic minorities to synod.
- Of the 19 classes who delegated ethnic minorities to synod in the past nine years, six delegated one ethnic minority, one delegated two, four delegated three, and one delegated four. Seven classes delegated an ethnic minority almost every year.
- Twenty-eight classes have not delegated a single ethnic minority to synod in those nine years.
- Not a single ethnic minority has been delegated from all eleven Canadian classes combined in those nine years.
- Perhaps the appointment of ethnic advisers by the denominational office makes classes think it is unnecessary for them to invest time and effort into the development of ethnic minority leadership on the local level.

It was the hope of the original overture that, because of the appointment of ethnic advisers, delegation of ethnic minorities to synod by the classes

“would be quickly forthcoming.” Classes have been encouraged repeatedly to do this. When Synod 1995 discussed the establishment of the position of ethnic adviser, a number of delegates urged classes to delegate ethnic minorities. One of the recommendations of the 1996 report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God was that “classes, with the assistance of the CRCNA offices and agencies, recruit and assist persons from ethnic minority groups to participate in the ministries of classis, including representation to synod, agency boards, and other ministries of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 514). Synod 1998 heard reports on how the church was responding to this report, and this synod, too, encouraged classes “to recruit and delegate ethnic-minority persons to synod, to agency boards, and to classical standing committees” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 353). The repeated encouragement of synod has had limited effect in terms of the delegation of ethnic minorities to synod by the classes.

Not only has the encouragement of synod had limited effect on the classes in terms of delegating ethnic minorities to synod, but, as Table 3 illustrates, the service of ethnic advisers has also had limited effect.

Table 3: Effect of ethnic advisers on classes

Classis Interim/Ministry Committees were asked to respond to the following:	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
The service of ethnic advisers has encouraged our classis to delegate ethnic minority members to synod.	16%	64%	21%
The service of ethnic advisers has helped our classis gain a greater sense of ownership of the denomination.	10%	60%	30%

Only sixteen percent of Classical Interim and /or Ministry Committees indicated that the service of ethnic advisers encouraged their classis to delegate ethnic minorities to synod, and only ten percent said that the service of ethnic advisers helped their classes gain a greater sense of ownership of the denomination. Part of the reason for this may be that ethnic advisers are not appointed or delegated by classes and do not report to classes. Whatever the reason, the service of ethnic advisers seems to have little effect on the determination of classes to delegate ethnic minorities to synod.

B. Grounds 2 and 6

Ground 2: Several of the ethnic communities of the CRC have repeatedly stated that they yearn to be at the table of policy and decision-making at the synodical level.

Ground 6: This practice affirms a sense of CRC ownership by various ethnic communities.

When Synod 1995 discussed whether or not it should begin the practice of appointing ethnic advisers to synod, one delegate noted that some who attended the Multiethnic Conference were asking, “When will we get out of the balcony and on to the floor?” “Until that day,” the delegate continued, “I think

this step is a logical step out of the Multiethnic Conference, giving people a true voice.” An ethnic minority delegate said, “We want to have ownership. We want to feel that this is our own, so we can wear that same badge with the triangle and the cross and feel like this is ours, too. . . . It would help us a whole lot if our people felt ownership of the denomination, ownership through participation, that some of our people could come and actually be here.”

Others, especially those from classes that were already delegating ethnic minorities to synod, spoke against the appointment of ethnic advisers and encouraged the church instead “to work very hard to have representation on our boards or at synod, and not to have another group alongside. We need to be sure we are serious about integrating multiethnic people in our church in every area and not put something alongside of it.”

When the survey asked the questions suggested by the two grounds above, similar tensions were evident.

1. Question 1: Has this position brought ethnic minorities to the table of policy and decision making at the synodical level?

When ethnic advisers were asked if their service had an effect on the decisions synod made, 46 percent agreed while 33 percent disagreed and 20 percent were unsure. Almost half believed they made a difference. However, a recurring theme, especially prominent when respondents were asked how the position of ethnic adviser could be improved, is that ethnic advisers will never be an actual part of synodical decision-making if they are unable to make motions and unable to vote. Ethnic advisers are near, not really at, the table of policy and decision-making at the synodical level.

2. Question 2: Has the position of ethnic adviser increased the sense of ownership of the denomination among ethnic minorities?

Table 4 contains the responses to that question from ethnic advisers, ethnic minority synodical delegates, and ethnic or multiethnic congregations.

Table 4: Ownership of the denomination

Those asked	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Ethnic Advisers -			
• My service as an ethnic adviser gave me a greater sense of ownership of the denomination.	82%	12%	6%
• My service as an ethnic adviser gave my own congregation a greater sense of ownership of the denomination.	56%	6%	38%
Ethnic Minority Synodical Delegates -			
• The participation of ethnic advisers has had an impact on my congregation.	42%	41%	18%
Councils of Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic Congregations -			
• The service of ethnic advisers had an impact on our congregation.	18%	33%	48%
• The service of ethnic advisers has helped our congregation gain a greater sense of ownership of the denomination.	24%	45%	32%
• The service of ethnic advisers has encouraged our congregation to greater participation in the ministry of our classis and/or our denomination.	15%	45%	39%

The above table indicates that service as an ethnic adviser has increased the sense of CRC ownership for those who actually served as ethnic advisers. It has not produced a corresponding sense of ownership in ethnic minority congregations.

C. *Grounds 3 and 5*

Ground 3: Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.

Ground 5: Attendance and participation at synod and on synodical advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.

The request for ethnic advisers was made in 1995 after Synod 1994 declined to expand the size of two of our denominational boards, leaving some to assert that the participation of ethnic minorities was restricted. The overture requesting ethnic advisers asserted that “attendance and participation at synod and on its advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from the nations to become so conversant with CRC policies and practices that delegation to synod and/or appointment to boards will be quickly forthcoming.”

Has that happened? Ethnic advisers were asked if they had served in various positions *after* they had served as an ethnic adviser. Of the seventeen who responded:

- One served on a denominational board.
- Four served as synodical delegates.
- Six served on classical committees.
- Seven had not served in any of these positions.
- Two did not remember.

Note: These numbers total more than seventeen because respondents checked all that applied.

When asked if they had served in any of these positions because they had been an ethnic adviser, the response was:

- Yes: 38 percent.
- No: 63 percent.

The position of ethnic adviser has not increased the delegation of ethnic minorities to synod nor increased the election of ethnic minorities to denominational boards as quickly as the original overture envisioned. In addition, the majority of ethnic advisers who did serve in a classical or denominational position indicate that such service did not result because they had served as an ethnic adviser.

Did the appointment of ethnic advisers help the denomination reach the goals stated by Synod 1995, namely:

1. To bring ethnic communities to “the table of policy and decision making at the synodical level.”
2. To provide “an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.” Specifically mentioned in this regard was the

desire of several of our denominational boards to include persons of our ethnic communities.

Table 5 reports the answers of all respondents to that question.

Table 5: The position of ethnic advisers has helped us reach these goals

Those asked	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Ethnic Advisers	47%	20%	33%
Ethnic Minority Synodical Delegates	56%	26%	19%
Agency Directors & Board Presidents	40%	35%	25%
Synodical Officers & Advisory Committee Chairs & Reporters	59%	6%	35%
Classical Interim/Ministry Committees	62%	5%	34%
Councils of Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic Congregations	33%	18%	48%
Councils of Congregations not Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic	42%	10%	47%

The high level of uncertainty in response to this question may be explained, partially at least, by the fact that the survey used one question to ask about two goals: (1) bringing ethnic communities to the table of policy and decision-making at the synodical level and (2) providing an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities. It is possible that some respondents felt that one goal had been reached but believed the other had not. Nonetheless, the overall perception is that the service of ethnic advisers has not been the stepping stone that Synod 1995 hoped it would be.

D. Ground 4: The presence of ethnic advisers would be affirming for delegates to synod from the various ethnic communities.

The survey gathered information on the above ground by asking the questions in Table 6.

Table 6: The affirming nature of the position of ethnic adviser

Those asked	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Ethnic advisers – My service as an ethnic adviser affirmed ethnic minority synodical delegates	63%	19%	19%
Ethnic minority synodical delegates – The presence of ethnic advisers affected my experience as a synodical delegate.	57%	6%	28%

Most of us feel overwhelmed or intimidated when we are the minority at a particular gathering. We are hesitant to speak and often defer to others. That changes when a critical mass of similar people is present. The survey indicates that the addition of six or seven ethnic advisers to the few ethnic minority synodical delegates has been a beneficial experience for those delegates.

E. Ground 7: Should the practice prove counterproductive to the intended aims, it can be discontinued.

In this ground, synod provided a way to discontinue the appointment of ethnic advisers before the recommended five year period. As already indicated, Synod 2000 extended this position for another five years. The question facing Synod 2005 is whether the position should be continued for more years.

IV. Analysis

Although the position of ethnic adviser has given ethnic advisers themselves a greater sense of ownership of the denomination, their appointment has not significantly helped councils of ethnic minority and/or multiethnic congregations gain a greater sense of ownership nor has it encouraged such congregations to greater participation in the ministry of their classis and denomination. The position has not significantly encouraged classes to delegate ethnic minority members to synod nor has it helped classes gain a greater sense of ownership of the denomination. The position has not been the stepping stone envisioned by Synod 1995.

That is not to say the position has been unimportant. It has given a number of people who would not otherwise have participated in synod an opportunity to serve on a synodical level. Some of those have served in other classical and denominational positions after serving as an ethnic adviser. Though its direct effect in various areas of the denomination is less than synod had hoped for, we must remember to ask: What would the level of ethnic minority participation have been without this position?

The position has had a number of positive effects. It has demonstrated the desire of our denomination to incorporate ethnic minorities, and it has given ethnic minorities additional access to synod. As one ethnic minority council said, "It is better than having no voice at all." It has also given delegates from areas where there are few ethnic minorities the opportunity to work with people of other races and cultures. It has, to use the words in part of our mandate, provided "mutual enrichment . . . for the benefit of the whole church."

The position of ethnic advisers has been one stream among many through which the denomination has attempted to incorporate ethnic minorities. There have been other streams. For example, Synod 1995 encouraged "boards, agencies and itself and future synods to include in their committees persons who reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of our denomination . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656). Synod 1998 appointed a thirteen-member Multiethnic Strategies Committee "in order to develop specific strategies which will continue to move us toward becoming a diverse family of God." One of the grounds used to support the formation of this committee recognized "the need to prepare the denomination for the rapidly changing multi-ethnic population and culture of North America (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 408)." This committee reported on various strategies that were adopted by the Ministries Coordinating Council and the Board of Trustees for implementation by the Board and by denominational agencies and institutions (*Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 529-35). Synod 2000 "affirmed the antiracism initiatives as detailed in the Ethnic and Racial Diversity report and urged all agencies and educational institutions to participate in institutional antiracism training" (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 634). This training, which deals with personal prejudices and with institutional racism, has helped a number of our agencies better understand and more fully incorporate people from various cultures.

All these streams together have had an effect on the denomination, and it is difficult to talk about any one of them in isolation from the others. Through a number of efforts and decisions, progress is being made, and we are slowly including ethnic minority persons in significant ways. Although it has not been steady, the number of ethnic minority synodical delegates has increased

over the years. In 2004, an ethnic minority person was elected as an officer of synod, the first time that has happened in our denomination. The number of ethnic minorities on our denominational boards is also increasing. For example, in 1990, only one ethnic minority served on our Home Missions board. Today seven serve. In 1990, only two ethnic minorities served on our World Relief board (CRWRC). For the past eight years, six or seven have served. In 1990, only one ethnic minority served on the CRC Publications board. This year, there are five. Similar gains have been made on other boards, and classes and the boards themselves must work hard to ensure that this increase continues. This is especially important as a number of our boards downsize from classical to regional boards—from fifty members to approximately twenty members. The boards themselves and our denominational Board of Trustees must make sure that this downsizing does not adversely affect the presence of ethnic minorities on our boards.

We are making progress in incorporating ethnic minorities, but the progress is much too slow. The 1996 report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God said:

At all levels of denominational life persons of color struggle with a sense of *belonging*. Ethnic minority members from multiethnic or predominantly Anglo congregations often are expected to stretch their comfort zones far more than their ethnic majority brothers and sisters are expected to do. Leaders of ethnic minority congregations wonder who made the rules, and they tend to occupy the back seats in many denominational settings. Too many persons from ethnic minority groups have left the CRC—not because of its Reformed world and life view but because of the lack of full acceptance at the family table.

(*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 218)

At Synod 2000, the denominational Board of Trustees observed, “Since the early 1970s it has been the mandate of Race Relations to dismantle racism in the CRC. In spite of its best efforts, this goal has not yet been accomplished” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 531). The Board also indicated that it had not been able to fulfill the mandate of Synod 1996 to establish a database of people who reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the denomination so these people could be consulted to serve on various boards and committees. “We have not found an effective mechanism by which to collect this information. We have requested the names of persons from the churches, but the response was disappointing” (*Acts of Synod of 2000*, p. 533). Thus, the database envisioned by Synod 1996 does not exist.

There is still plenty of work to be done, and this work calls for the full participation of all members of our denomination.

V. The work ahead of our denomination

Table 7 indicates the reply of all respondents to the statement, “The position of ethnic adviser should be continued.”

Table 7: The position of ethnic adviser should be continued

Those asked	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Ethnic Advisers	89%	6%	6%
Ethnic Minority Synodical Delegates	77%	6%	18%
Agency Directors & Board Presidents	45%	25%	30%
Synodical Officers & Advisory Committee Chairs & Reporters	60%	28%	13%
Classical Interim/Ministry Committees	85%	5%	10%
Councils of Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic Congregations	67%	3%	30%
Councils of Congregations not Ethnic Minority/Multiethnic	47%	11%	42%

When people were asked to respond to that statement, only two alternatives were given—the position could be continued or discontinued. The high percentage of respondents who agree that the position should be continued reveals a desire on the part of many to incorporate ethnic minorities into the denomination's life. However, continuing or discontinuing this position are not the only options before us. From the beginning, this position was seen as temporary. It was intended to be a five-year jump-start that would make congregations and classes more aware of the rich ethnic diversity of our denomination and inspire them to be intentional in using the gifts of others. The five years is now ten. Should the denomination extend this temporary measure again, perhaps even indefinitely?

One possibility is to retain this position while enhancing it by giving ethnic advisers the privileges of making motions and voting, something we do with members-at-large on our denominational boards. This will truly bring ethnic advisers to the table of policy and decision-making at the synodical level, but it raises other questions. If these advisers have such privileges, should the same privileges be extended to our women advisers and to our faculty advisers? Synodical delegates are responsible to a particular classis. Do we wish to give such privileges to persons who do not represent or report to any classis? To enhance the position in this way does not seem wise.

Our committee believes that this position must be phased out as something more significant replaces it, something that flows naturally from the congregations and classes and something that is directly responsible to the classes. As previously indicated, the position of ethnic adviser has not been the stepping stone that synod hoped it would become in terms of denominational, or even classical, involvement. The experience of serving as an ethnic adviser has been beneficial for those who have served, but the surveys indicate that this position has had little impact on congregations and classes. Some multiethnic congregations do not even know the position exists. Classical Interim and /or Ministry Committees inform us that the service of ethnic advisers has not encouraged their classes to delegate ethnic minority members to synod, and the numbers confirm that observation. In the past decade, twenty-eight of our forty-seven classes (almost two-thirds) have not delegated a single ethnic minority person to synod. Five more have delegated only one ethnic minority person to synod in those ten years. A partial explanation of this meager response is that some classes do not have many ethnic minority officebearers. It is also true that a more intentional address to this matter by classes will result in a fuller incorporation of ethnic minorities into the total ministry of the classis and, through the classis, into the ministry of our denomination.

If the denomination wishes to incorporate ethnic minorities into every facet of its denominational life, it needs to be much more intentional in doing this, and it needs to work from the bottom up as well as from the top down. The denomination cannot expect ethnic minorities to feel at home in it because a denominational board appoints a handful of ethnic minorities to serve at synod. The denomination cannot expect ethnic minorities to feel at home in it because the denominational Office of Race Relations assures ethnic minorities that there is a place for them. Incorporation of ethnic minorities into the broader life of the denomination must be done by all members and is better done on the classical level, a feeder to the denominational level. Attendance and participation at synod can be a training ground, but it may not be the most effective training ground. There is little time for others to mentor ethnic advisers, and the entire synodical experience is over in less than a week. On the other hand, classes meet two or three times a year, and there are plenty of opportunities throughout the year for people to mentor those not familiar with how our assemblies function. It may even be counterproductive for a person to be introduced to church assemblies on a synodical level. Service at synod can be rather daunting even for those who have had previous experience in church councils and in classes. To place people who have no or very little experience in councils or classes on the floor of synod may be a way to train them; it may also be a way to discourage them, to intimidate them, and to make them feel inadequate.

Councils and classes are much more effective arenas for training and incorporating people. Synod has repeatedly called classes to “recruit and assist persons from ethnic minority groups to participate in the ministries of classis, including representation to synod, agency boards, and other ministries of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 514). The diversity that the denomination values will come to significant visible expression when each classis responds positively to these repeated encouragements of synod. As has been noted several times in this report, progress has been much too slow. If the denomination wishes in the here and now to resemble that great multitude before the throne “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9), it must take much bolder steps that challenge all of us to translate our words into reality in every one of the classes of our denomination, not in just a few. It is past time for the Anglo majority to stretch its comfort zone by setting a measurable goal and diligently striving for that goal in the assurance that all of us can do better than we are currently doing through the Lord who strengthens us.

VI. Proposals

A. *Setting a measurable goal*

We have observed that neither synod’s repeated encouragement nor the presence of ethnic advisers at synod has had a significant effect on the determination of most classes to delegate ethnic minority officebearers to synod. If the goal of our denomination is to have ethnic minority communities significantly represented at the table of policy and decision-making at the synodical level, then, at synod, the classes together must set a measurable goal to which they will be held accountable.

To that end, we propose that by Synod 2011 the synodical delegation of each classis include at least one ethnic minority. Currently, 22 percent of our congregations identify themselves as ethnic minority or multiethnic. We do not know what that percentage will be six years from now, but, even in terms of present realities, it is not unrealistic to ask each classis to ensure that 25 percent of its delegation, one of its four delegates, be an ethnic minority.

Obviously, this is an ambitious goal, especially when nearly two-thirds of our classes have not delegated a single ethnic minority to synod in the past nine years. Only through prayerful and diligent work on the part of each classis will the denomination realize what it has been encouraging for the last decade. Even though some may be uncomfortable with specific goals concerning the numerical representation of particular people, it is time to stretch our comfort zone for the sake of the greater good.

As this report indicates, seven classes have attained this goal already. Each year, they delegate at least one ethnic minority to synod. Undoubtedly, other classes can meet this goal in a short time if they intentionally work at it because a number of ethnic minorities already serve as officebearers in their congregations. For other classes, this will take longer. That is why we are proposing a goal that is almost six years out. During those six years, ethnic minority and Anglo majority communities must work together so that leaders are identified and/or developed.

B. Working together

A number of officebearers view attendance at classis as a burden and are not eager to attend. This is even more true when persons are not obligated to attend classis because they serve an emerging church or are involved in another form of ministry. This lack of attendance is unfortunate because participation in the meetings and activities of classis not only gives people familiarity with how the denomination functions but also provides opportunities for people to know and understand each other and their gifts. A member of one of the classes that regularly delegates ethnic minorities to synod said, "Most ethnic minorities have thrown themselves into being part of this classis and function on various committees as well. We have no rules about delegation. Ethnic minorities are elected because of their involvement." Our denomination will be greatly assisted in reaching the goal of an ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis if members of ethnic communities throw themselves into the work of their classes.

Classes themselves must also take an active role in this area. A number of ethnic minorities are either pastors or members of emerging churches—churches that do not officially delegate members to classis. Not only do these members need to be encouraged to participate in the meetings and activities of their classes, but classes must make it evident that such involvement is valued. A member of another of the classes that regularly delegates ethnic minorities to synod said, "We do not have a rule that requires ethnic participation, but we do have a consciousness about it, and it is always a part of our activity. We encourage ethnic participation in all levels of classis and the denomination. Obviously, this consciousness does not simply happen, so we work at it." If ethnic minorities are to be significantly incorporated into the meetings and activities of classis, classes must work at it. Classes must not avoid this work by saying, "We are unable to find ethnic minorities who are qualified to serve" or "there are only a few ethnic minorities in our classis."

C. Enlarging the pool

We realize that the number of ethnic minorities in some classes is not large. Thus, in some classes, it may be necessary to enlarge the pool of people eligible for delegation to synod. When a church council is unable to delegate a minister and an elder or two elders to a classis meeting, the council delegates a deacon. Classes routinely seat these deacons by way of exception. (A number of classes also delegate deacons in addition to ministers and elders.)

We contacted the churches in the classis of one of our committee members to determine how many ethnic minority council members were present. The numbers are: one male pastor, one male evangelist, two male elders, four female elders, seven male deacons, and five female deacons. Currently, women are not permitted to serve as synodical delegates. Thus, the pool of eligible males in this classis is four (one pastor, one evangelist, and two elders). If synod permitted, by way of exception, the delegation of ethnic minority deacons, the pool of officebearers eligible for delegation to synod would be enlarged to eleven. This would make a significant difference in the ability of this classis to delegate an ethnic minority to synod each year.

The common perception among us is that a person must first serve as a deacon before serving as an elder. Although the numbers will be different in every classis, the pattern in each classis probably will be the same: There will be more ethnic minority deacons than ethnic minority elders. Synod needs to tap the pool of ethnic minority deacons by way of exception until the number of ethnic minority ministers and elders increases.

What if some classes find that the years between Synod 2005 and the election of synodical delegates to Synod 2011 do not give them enough time to reach that goal? We considered the possibility of recommending the establishment of a pool of ethnic minority officebearers who would be available to serve in such situations. To fill the position of ethnic adviser we have a pool of people, officebearers and nonofficebearers, with particular gifts and abilities from which up to seven people are selected to serve at synod. We could do something similar so a classis that is unable to achieve this goal by 2011 could request a person from a pool of officebearers to be a part of its delegation. However, we do not believe this is an acceptable solution. A classis should be represented by members of its own classis, not by an unknown officebearer selected from a denominational pool.

The goal that each classis delegate an ethnic minority is an important one—a goal that will be reached only if the denomination expects each classis to reach it. If that goal is not attained in the five and a half years between Synods 2005 and the election of delegates to Synod 2011, another way to fulfill this goal must be found. In each classis, there are ethnic minorities who, though they may or may not have served as officebearers, are respected by the classis and who could serve as part of a synodical delegation. For example, in some classes, ethnic minorities who serve on the steering committees of emerging churches could represent their classes well at synod.

At this point, we are not proposing that the pool of eligible synodical delegates be enlarged in this way. We simply raise the possibility—a possibility that a future synod should consider if this assists the denomination to attain the goal of having an ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis.

D. Removing barriers; building bridges

For years, some classes provided financial assistance to officebearers who would be financially penalized if they served as delegates to synod. When Synod 1995 established the position of ethnic adviser, it decided, "in keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (not to exceed \$50 per day) will be available for an ethnic adviser who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod" (*Church Order and Rules For Synodical Procedure* 2004, p. 89). We are not proposing a specific amount of reimbursement because a classis itself can best determine need in each case. We are proposing that classes make sure that finances are not a barrier to the delegation of an ethnic minority. This is especially important because a number of ethnic minority pastors are so-called tentmakers, people who work at another job while serving a congregation, not people who can be at synod for a week while the congregation continues to pay their salaries.

We also remind councils and classes that a denominational agency, CRC Race Relations, is available to assist with leadership development and other services that may be helpful as our denomination works to achieve this goal.

E. Phasing out ethnic advisers

Although the position of ethnic adviser did not achieve everything synod had hoped for, it was a visible testimony to the denomination's desire to bring ethnic minorities to the table of policy and decision-making at the denominational level. Thus, we propose that the position of ethnic adviser continue as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five.

The number *twenty-five* represents the highest number of ethnic minorities delegated to synod in a particular year (18 in 1999 and 2003) plus the maximum number of ethnic advisers approved by Synod 1995 for appointment to synod (7). At least three months before synod, the general secretary knows how many ethnic minorities have been delegated to synod. The general secretary should appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no less than two) shall be appointed. The increase in ethnic minority participation at synod must come from classical delegation not from denominational appointment. The year that the number of ethnic minority delegates reaches twenty-five, the position of ethnic adviser should be discontinued in the confidence that classes will continue to include at least one ethnic minority in their delegation. We are hopeful that the position of ethnic adviser can be discontinued at Synod 2007, the year our denomination celebrates its 150th anniversary.

F. Reporting denominational progress

"What gets modeled gets done," says a church consultant. We are extremely grateful to the classes that are already modeling this goal for the rest of the denomination, assuring all of us that this is an attainable goal. The consultant also says "what gets measured gets done" and adds, "empowering a vision requires the setting of standards and then measuring your results to see if you are matching up." To give the denomination an indication of how it is matching up, we propose that in each year's *Agenda for Synod*, the Board of Trustees report on the denomination's progress in attaining the goal of a minimum of one ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis. In this report, the goal will be held before all classes, and the ways classes are achieving the goal

will be shared so other classes can be encouraged and assisted as together we strive to reach that goal.

The 1995 overture that requested ethnic advisers, as well as Synod 1995 itself in one of the grounds used when it appointed ethnic advisers, also expressed a desire that the number of ethnic minorities serving on denominational boards increase. Our report has discussed that only briefly because our focus has been the floor of synod, the place where ethnic advisers serve. We trust that as classes work to delegate ethnic minorities to synod, they will also find ethnic minorities willing to serve on classical committees and denominational boards. Ethnic minority presence on our denominational boards should also be part of the report of the Board of Trustees so this goal, too, is held before our agencies and classes.

One of the strategies reported to Synod 2000 is the commitment of denominational boards, agencies, and institutions to "recruiting, hiring and retaining ethnic-minority employees" (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 532). This was not discussed when ethnic advisers were appointed. Thus, we offer no recommendation in this area. We do suggest that the denomination's progress in hiring ethnic minorities at every level of employment also be a part of the Board of Trustees' report.

G. *Remaining committed to the goal*

At Synod 2011, an ethnic minority will be a part of each classical delegation if the denomination reaches its goal. Synod 2010 will be the last synod able to make any adjustments necessary to achieve this. If it is apparent that the goal will not be achieved, Synod 2009 should appoint a small committee (or should instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee) to recommend to Synod 2010 steps that may help the denomination reach its goal. For example, as mentioned previously, it is possible to enlarge the pool of synodical delegates by permitting a classis to delegate a respected ethnic minority leader who is not an officebearer.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to chairman Rev. Esteban Lugo, reporter Rev. George Vander Weit, and committee member Ms. Sari Mills.

B. That synod adopt the following goal: That by Synod 2011 all classes will delegate at least one ethnic minority to synod each year.

Grounds:

1. Although synods have repeatedly encouraged classes to delegate ethnic minorities to synod, the response of most classes has been minimal or nonexistent.
2. A specific goal for each classis is necessary if we are to become a denomination in which ethnic minorities are intentionally incorporated across the board rather than a denomination in which ethnic minorities are incorporated in only a few classes.

C. That synod encourage each classis to include at least one ethnic minority in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006.

Ground: There are some classes that can achieve this goal because a number of ethnic minority officebearers serve in their member congregations.

D. That synod encourage ethnic minority members of the denomination to participate in the meetings and activities of their classes.

Ground: Such participation gives people familiarity with how the denomination functions and helps members of classis become better acquainted with each other's gifts.

E. That synod encourage classes to specifically invite ethnic minorities to participate in the meetings and activities of classis.

Ground: Such participation gives people familiarity with how other cultures function and helps members of classis become better acquainted with each other's gifts.

F. That synod permit, by way of exception, the delegation of ethnic minority deacons to its meetings.

Grounds:

1. The delegation of deacons to a broader assembly, by way of exception, is longstanding among us.
2. This exception will enlarge the pool of ethnic minorities available for delegation to synod.

Note: If this recommendation is adopted, this exception must be included in a Supplement to Church Order Article 45.

G. That synod encourage classes to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that finances are not a barrier to the delegation of ethnic minorities.

Ground: Financial assistance will permit some people to serve at synod who would be unable to do so without such help.

H. That synod remind councils and classes that CRC Race Relations is available to assist with leadership development and other services to incorporate ethnic minorities into the ongoing work of the church.

Ground: Race Relations is the agency mandated to assist councils and classes in this work.

I. That synod continue the position of ethnic adviser as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five, after which time it shall be discontinued.

Ground: Continuing this position only to the point where the number of ethnic minorities at synod is comparable to current levels reflects synod's desire that this position be a temporary catalyst to encourage classes to delegate ethnic minorities

J. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to report in the annual Agenda for Synod, and to make recommendations if necessary, on the denomination's progress in attaining its goal of at least one ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis and on the denomination's progress in incorporating ethnic minorities on denominational boards.

Ground: Because our Board of Trustees acts for synod between sessions and because it supervises all denominational ministries, this board is uniquely qualified to measure denominational progress and to encourage us in it.

K. That Synod 2009 appoint a small committee (or instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee) to report to Synod 2010 on adjustments that may be necessary to attain the goal of an ethnic minority delegate from each classis if it appears that the denomination will not achieve that goal at Synod 2011.

Ground: The incorporation of ethnic minorities from each classis into our broadest decision-making assembly is an important goal.

L. That synod discharge the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod.

Committee to Review the Practice of
Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod

David Armour

Fernando del Rosario

David Engelhard (ex officio)

Esteban Lugo, chair

Sari Mills

Tim Nguyen

Peter Szto

George Vander Weit, reporter

Mary Vermeer

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I. Executive summary

From the beginning of its nearly 150-year history, the Christian Reformed Church has been identified with a strong and enthusiastic commitment to Christian day school education. This active support is stated as an expectation for officebearers in Church Order article 71 and has been regularly confirmed by synodical statements and decisions, the last one in 1955. Since then, however, the CRC has witnessed significant changes within its North American environment. Synod 2000 therefore asked our committee to consider the cultural, ethnic, and demographic changes in our society, particularly as they affected funding, when it appointed us to prepare another report on the CRC's tradition of support for Christian day school education.

As we reflected on the changes since 1955, we concluded that the present context is a golden opportunity to proclaim to the world beyond the CRC the good news of Christ's lordship over education. Grateful for the growing diversity in the CRC and the new mission opportunities presented to us by our pluralistic society, we also recognized that the increasing availability of educational choice and the rising cost of Christian day school education present us with formidable challenges. Taking all this into account, in our report to Synod 2003, we proposed that, in addition to the venerable biblical-theological building blocks of covenant and kingdom, we consider evangelism-mission as a third foundational principle.

The addition of evangelism-mission as a third ground for Christian day school education also addresses an oft-heard criticism of Reformed Christian day schools, namely that they isolate our children and our communities and make us introverted rather than outward-looking and mission-minded. We acknowledge that this *can* be, though it need *not* be, an unintended consequence of Reformed Christian day schools. Consequently, we asked synod to challenge the CRCNA and its member congregations to provide financial assistance to students and families "who will contribute to greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, race, ethnicity, special needs)" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 627). We also recommended that synod "urge CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 626).

When Synod 2003 dealt with our report, it adopted these recommendations and reconfirmed the CRC's commitment to Reformed Christian day school education along with the principle of broad-based church support for it. As a ground for this commitment, synod posited the covenantal principle that "Christian day school education is both a communal church responsibility and a parental commitment" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 626). Synod also recognized that local congregations and groups of congregations need to apply this

principle in ways that are sensitive to local needs and issues. However, Synod 2003 also asked our committee to continue its work and to address in greater detail three issues:

- a) The nature of the churches' commitment to Reformed Christian schools and the churches' work of evangelism;
- b) The means by which small churches can fulfill their baptismal vows as it relates to Christian day school education;
- c) The nature of divisions and brokenness in churches where not all families have equal resources, commitment, and sensitivities regarding Christian day schools.

(Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 630, 631)

The report we now present to synod and the Christian Reformed Church takes its departure from this new additional assignment, anticipating the more detailed discussion of our new context and the current challenges facing Reformed Christian education later in section VI. The fundamental changes we describe in the world have to do with an increasingly secular society and culture, the growing availability of educational choice to parents, and the greater diversity and resultant push for the Christian Reformed Church itself to become more outward directed and evangelistically minded. The CRC sometimes feels itself torn between pressure to focus inward in order to maintain its own identity as a Reformed confessional body and a competing push to reach out even if that means minimizing Reformed distinctiveness.

In that context, keeping biblical theological principles clearly before us and making our definitions explicit and our terms clear became the first order of the day. In particular, we attempt to clarify the proper relationship among the responsibilities of the family, the church, and the Christian school in light of Church Order Article 71 and the doctrine of sphere sovereignty. In addition, we propose a definition of evangelism-mission to guide our discussion. Evangelism should be seen as a task distinct from the broader Christian vocation that is part of the mission of the kingdom of God; evangelism is explicit gospel communication for the express purpose of calling people to conversion and discipleship.

Thus, after a section in which we reflect on our committee's mandate in the light of Synod 2003's decisions (section III), we devote two major sections to outlining the history of the CRC's support for Christian day school education, particularly the key decisions of synods over the years (section IV), and provide a summary synthesis of the biblical-theological convictions that undergird it (section V). From the history, we see that the CRC has not only consistently supported the cause of Christian day schools as a principle but has also repeatedly reaffirmed active *church* involvement and support by requiring officebearers to promote the cause as well as various means of financial support for parents. The history of synodical pronouncements on the matter shows a real sensitivity to changing circumstances and needs; there is significant development and growth in the understanding of Christian education in the mission of God's people in the world.

The biblical-theological principles undergirding Christian day school education begin with the covenant and over time also increasingly emphasize the kingdom of God. Our committee considers these themes to be still valid and essential but also judges that the circumstances of our age especially require us to consider evangelism-mission as a third building block. We judge

this especially important in light of our heightened sensitivity to our calling as a denomination to be more mission minded and outward directed. This proper biblical mandate is sometimes set over against the vocation of Christian day school education that is then seen as being inward directed and concentrated only on “our” children. We judge this to be a mistake and suggest biblical-theological as well as practical reasons why we think so. Judging that the school itself has a missiological purpose, we place this whole discussion in a comprehensive *narrative* framework, the story of God and his people, providentially plotted as Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation.

With that framework in place, we examine the changed circumstances of our day in comparison with the most recent previous synodical statement on Christian education in 1955 (section VI). In short, the CRC has become more diverse; the world has become more secular. This places a twofold pressure on education. On the one hand Reformed Christian education is challenged to renew its vision and bring on board as committed supporters CRC members who may not share the denomination’s history and memory or understanding. On the other hand, the legal secularization of our public square has especially affected public education and multiplied dissent from it, with growing choice of alternative schools and homeschooling.

We judge that while these changed circumstances present interesting and demanding challenges, this is above all a time of golden opportunity for Reformed Christian education. In an aggressively secular society, the very existence of Christian schools at all levels is an evangelistic witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as increasing numbers of evangelical Christians take up the cause of Christian education and start alternative schools, the Reformed community with its long and rich tradition of theology and practice in Christian education has a responsibility to share the riches God has given it. The responsibility here is compounded by the fact that there is growing missiological awareness among other evangelical Christians, notably those in the Pentecostal tradition, that the enterprise of world missions today very definitely needs Christian education at all levels, especially Christian higher education. Our Reformed tradition has a rich history of reflection and practice here that can be a real blessing to the worldwide mission of the Christian church in the third millennium.

This situation does mean, however, that Reformed Christians, and especially parents, are called to exercise great discernment in establishing, supporting, and sending their children to schools to be educated. Clarifying the distinctive character of Reformed Christian day school education is important and so is vigilance in seeing to it that Reformed Christian schools measure up to biblical standards of inclusion. Where boundaries and obstacles based on economic or class status, race and ethnicity, or ability prevent some of God’s children from enjoying the benefits of Christian education, something is not the way it’s supposed to be. This may be part of the reason why, in the survey we commissioned of CRC members about Christian education (section VI, B, 6), in addition to finding some erosion of awareness about Reformed identity, we found that financial need is the reason most commonly cited by parents for not sending their children to a Christian school.

In section VII, as instructed by Synod 2003, we address the special circumstances and considerations of congregational conflict, small churches, and the relationship between the church’s commitment to Christian day schools and to

evangelism. We believe that it is important to place these issues in context: not only have each of these matters been addressed by previous synods and by other church bodies, but also conflicts about Christian education should be seen and dealt with in the same way other issues of congregational conflict are. After a discussion of these matters, we propose that synod adopt a series of resolutions as advice to small churches in particular, noting that much of this advice also applies to all CRC congregations (Recommendation J). We judge it helpful to consider smaller churches as one more example of genuine diversity in the CRC.

The relationship between our commitment to evangelism and to Christian education has historical precedent in the decisions of Synod 1953 with respect to the native schools in New Mexico. Principles and strategies proposed then are still valuable, and our detailed recommendations for North America, Reformed universities and colleges, and world missions (Recommendations M-P) attempt to apply these principles to our current situation.

Our report concludes (section VII, D; section VIII; Appendices A, B, and C) with a detailed discussion and advice to the churches for developing congregationally based plans of financial support for Christian education. We advocate no specific plan but specify the parameters and guidelines that should be followed by the churches in implementing such plans.

Note: Throughout the report we insert FAQs (frequently asked questions) that provide short summaries of the main text, that address specific questions we anticipate, or that address questions that have already been posed to our committee. The specific questions are not quotations or direct citations of conversations or questions but the literary creation by the committee for purposes of informing and illuminating the report. These FAQs will be inserted at key points in the report. This background will help readers understand the character of the questions as well as the answers.

II. Introduction

A. *Original mandate 2001*

Synod 2001 appointed the Committee to Study Christian Day School Education in response to several overtures and a communication from various classes. The original mandate of the committee reads as follows:

That synod appoint a study committee with the mandate to study the support for distinctively Reformed Christian day schools by the Christian Reformed denomination and its local congregations, to solicit input from local congregations, and to report to Synod 2003. The study will specifically include:

- a. The biblical, theological, and confessional bases for Christian day schools;
- b. The responsibility of a congregation in relation to its promise made at baptism;
- c. Other means by which the Christian Reformed denomination and the local congregations can concretely fulfill this baptismal vow.

Grounds:

- a. The Christian Reformed Church synod has not reaffirmed its commitment to Christian day school education since 1955. Since 1955, significant changes have occurred culturally, ethnically, and demographically in our society.
- b. Unique challenges face congregational members because of rising tuition costs.

- c. Diversities of income hold the potential for creating tension within a congregation around the issue of Christian day schools.
- d. New members brought into a congregation may find it a challenge to enroll their children in Christian day schools.
- e. This study will help congregations fulfill Church Order Article 71 regarding Christian day school education.

(*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 447)

B. *Analysis of original mandate 2001*

An analysis of the original mandate with its three points and its grounds indicate that the study ought to:

1. Provide a biblical and confessional rationale as to why the CRC denomination and its local congregations should continue to support Christian day schools or why such support is no longer warranted.
2. Clarify the relationship between a congregation's baptismal vow and its support for Christian day schools or for parents who send their children to Christian day schools.
3. Take into account cultural, ethnic, and demographic changes in our society and the CRC since 1955.
4. Consider the ramifications of rising tuition costs to parents as well as the wider diversities of income among church members. This leads to a consideration of what financial supports for Christian day schools a church ought to consider.
5. Consider how the church should promote Christian education. This includes recovering the vision and rekindling the passion of CRC members and orienting new members who are not familiar with the church's traditional support for Christian day schools.
6. Provide advice to the church, not the Christian day school. Nevertheless, the deliberate inclusion of the term *Reformed* as an adjective describing the Christian day school (the inclusion of his term was debated on the floor of synod and left in by motion) raises the question of what criteria if any a Christian day school should meet in order for the CRC to consider it for support.
7. Consider how the issue of parents who homeschool their children should be considered by the church.

C. *The decisions of Synod 2003 and the additional mandate to our committee*

Our committee reported to Synod 2003 and asked synod to commend our report to the churches for study and implementation and to "declare the work of the committee completed" (Recommendations O and P, *Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 364). We are grateful that synod adopted the majority of our recommendations, including the reaffirmation of the CRC's commitment to Christian education; the theological foundations of covenant, kingdom, and mission; and the communal responsibility of financial support for Christian education. Recognizing the diverse ways in which this support could be manifested and the primary responsibility of parents for Christian education, Synod 2003 also adopted our recommendation for a rewording of Church Order Article 71. Our final report to Synod 2005 includes the following

narrative context for these recommendations adopted by Synod 2003 but does not resubmit those recommendations already adopted:

2. That synod give thanks to God for the blessing of more than a century of Reformed Christian education provided by CRCNA members and for the many dedicated parents, teachers, administrators, and supporters who have labored faithfully and sacrificially during this time.
3. That synod, while respecting the various educational choices made in good faith by families, reaffirm the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to and promotion of Christian day school education from the elementary level through college and university.
4. That synod reaffirm that the Reformed emphasis on the covenant and the kingdom of God are foundational for Reformed Christian schools and affirm that mission is an additional foundational block for Reformed Christian schools.

Grounds:

- a. Covenant, kingdom, and mission together form the narrative of God's plan of salvation history: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation.
 - b. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* publicly professes that education is part of "the mission of God's people" (paragraph 50).
 - c. This is consistent with the decision of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to adopt a strategy that includes "Christian day school education in a full-orbed CRCNA mission program" (BOT Minute 2592, 3).
7. That synod urge CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education. Congregations should seek professional legal and tax accounting advice when drafting such plans.

Grounds:

- a. Christian day school education is both a communal church responsibility and a parental obligation.
 - b. A covenantal intergenerational financial support plan for the Christian day school education of all the children in a congregation is a fitting response to the vow made by the congregation when a child is baptized.
 - c. This flows naturally from the mutual stewardship and accountability that characterizes healthy congregations.
 - d. Financial difficulty should not be a barrier that prevents church members from sending their children to a Christian day school.
8. That synod encourage CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to assist students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity, special needs).

Ground: This is consistent with the CRC's commitment to greater diversity as reflected in synod's adoption of the study committee report from the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 595-619).

10. That synod request CRC Publications to provide the following educational materials for use by the churches:
 - a. Material for new-member orientation that includes, among other things, the position of the CRCNA on Christian day schools.
 - b. Diaconal training material to help churches in preparing and implementing plans for the communal financing of Christian schooling.
11. That synod instruct the general secretary of the CRCNA to send official correspondence to the President and to representatives of the U.S. Congress, as well as to state governments and state legislators, calling on them to enact

legislation that makes education choice without financial penalty available to families with school-age children. Similar letters are to be sent by the Canadian Director of Ministries to the Canadian provincial governments where appropriate.

Grounds:

- a. There is ample precedent for synod to make official resolutions (re “church burning,” *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 542) or to direct official correspondence to appropriate governments and their leaders (re “abortion,” *Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 528; “partial birth abortions,” *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 608).
 - b. Such a communication is consistent with the historic CRC position on funding for Christian day schools. A specific precedent was set in 1975 when synod sent a lengthy communication to the President of the United States pleading the same case. (A copy of the 1975 letter is provided in Appendix C.)
 - c. Educational choice is a matter of social justice. CRC members who have the resources are able to provide a Christian day school education for their children. It is the poor who suffer the most from lack of educational choice.
 - d. With the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2002 declaring that the Cleveland, Ohio, voucher plan is constitutional and an administration that favors school choice, the time is ripe for encouraging the United States government to act on this matter.
 - e. Because the situation in Canada is different from the United States (education is exclusively a provincial matter and some provinces do grant some aid to Christian schools), communicating with the provincial authorities is required and should be handled by the Canadian denominational office.
12. That synod encourage CRC members to make the matter of school choice and educational justice a matter of priority for prayer and action.

Grounds: See Grounds c and d in Recommendation 11 above.

13. That synod propose to the churches the following reworded Article 71 of the Church Order:

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools in which the biblical, Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall also urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

Grounds:

- a. Christian Reformed parents today have many more educational choices available to them than they did fifty years ago. The revision of Article 71 provides needed guidance to councils and parents about the educational vision and curricular content of Reformed Christian education in establishing and maintaining Reformed Christian day schools as well as for other choices such as homeschools or charter schools.
- b. On the basis of surveys (see section III, C of this report), there appears to be an erosion of support for Article 71 of the Church Order. The present wording assumes that a clear understood consensus exists in the CRC with respect to Reformed confessional identity as well as its implications for Christian education. This assumption cannot be made today. The rewording both clarifies what is meant by Reformed Christian education and allows for flexibility in its implementation.
- c. It is important that the Church Order articulate clearly the content and scope of the education that is desired for its present and future leadership and continuing membership. The CRC’s Reformed character, its membership, and its potential to evangelize and grow *as a Reformed*

church is linked to the flourishing of distinctive Reformed Christian education at all levels from elementary through university.

14. That synod urge pastors and councils to encourage the young people of their churches to attend Reformed Christian institutions of higher learning whenever possible.

Grounds:

- a. Our survey of pastors and councils suggests that the percentage of CRC young people who attend Christian colleges is perilously low. If so, this has profound implications for the future membership of the CRC. Studies (such as Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul*) suggest that an erosion of distinct confessional identity in college-level education has a noticeable negative effect on the church's retaining its educated young people and future leaders.
- b. The number of CRC young people attending college and university today is far greater than it was in 1955. A college education is as important today as a completed high school education may have been in 1955. In 1936, synod had the foresight to include high schools in its definition of Christian day school education, in spite of the fact that the "median years of school completed" for the adult population in the United States at that time was only about 8.5 years (U.S. Census Bureau). We should show equivalent foresight today when the vast majority of our Christian school graduates are going on to college.
- c. In the CRC's mission and vision statement, many of the areas listed call for "deeper understanding." That demands college-level study (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630).
- d. It is important that the Church Order articulate clearly the content and scope of the education that is desired for its present and future leadership and continuing membership. The CRC's Reformed character, its membership, and its potential to evangelize and grow as a Reformed church is linked to the flourishing of distinctive Reformed Christian education at all levels from elementary through university.
- e. Although blessed beyond measure by their Christian education, many eighteen-year-olds are simply not at a point where they are able to fully understand, embrace, or articulate why Christian education is both essential for them personally and essential to the CRC. We need our colleges to carry on this task.

(Recommendations from 2003 report adopted by synod,
Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 619-20, 626, 627-30)

Synod 2003, however, judged that our report was not ready to be sent to the churches, did not dismiss our committee, and instead gave us an additional assignment with the following mandate:

That synod mandate the committee to augment its study by including three additional matters and request that the committee conclude their study by September 15, 2004, so that their work can be sent to the churches in advance of synod and appear in the printed agenda for Synod 2005. These three matters are:

- a. The nature of the relationship between the churches' commitment to Reformed Christian schools and the churches' work of doing evangelism, specifically including the following areas:
 - 1) Reformed Christian day schools in the United States.
 - 2) Reformed Christian day schools in Canada.
 - 3) Reformed Colleges and universities.
 - 4) The role of Christian education in world missions.

Grounds:

- 1) The specific issue of how Christian schools and their support relate to the call to reach out evangelistically to "gather God's growing family" is

critical to the future of both the educational and evangelistic commitments of the church.

- 2) This issue (Ground 1) has not been directly addressed in the current report. While the important work of training church members for mission is included, the relationship between the churches' commitments to missions and to Christian day schools has not been sufficiently explored.
- b. The means by which small isolated churches can fulfill their baptismal vows as it relates to Christian day school education.

Grounds:

- 1) The current report was written primarily with clusters of churches as its context. However, many small and /or isolated churches may require different means to fulfill their baptismal vows.
- 2) The unique context and struggles of small, isolated churches should be addressed by the denomination.
- c. The nature of divisions and brokenness in churches, where not all families have equal resources, commitments, and sensitivities regarding Christian day school.

Grounds:

- 1) This was the original intent of the introduction of Overture 9 (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 438-39.)
- 2) Recommendation 3 of the advisory committee does not adequately address this significant concern.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 630-31)

D. Renewed vision

The language given in our *original* synodical mandate to provide the “biblical, theological and confessional bases for Christian day schools” was the occasion for considerable discussion by our committee. We understand this instruction not as a requirement to provide specific proof texts for Christian day schools from either Scripture or the Three Forms of Unity but to direct us in a more general way to an ecclesiastical rather than a sociological or strictly practical financial study. In other words, we seek to provide a rationale for Christian day school education that flows naturally from a biblically and confessionally informed Reformed worldview and vision of Christian discipleship. Our argument, in sum, is that the nurture of children in the believing community is a covenantal responsibility of both the parents and the larger community. Though some parents do home school their children, the necessity of a formal, institutional day school education remains for the community as a whole. In that case, covenantal demands point to a school that fully shares the faith commitments of parents and the Christian community. Furthermore, the Reformed conviction about the kingdom of God and Christ’s lordship over all creation requires education that honors Christ’s lordship. That, in sum, is the biblical, Reformed confessional, theological vision that flows from the Reformed understanding of Scripture (see *Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 63-89).

FAQ 1.1: Aren’t parents the only ones who are responsible for the education of their children? How can any other person or institution, especially such powerful entities as the state and the church, intervene in that duty without serious damage to the family unit?

A: Yes, parents are the ones who are given first and primary responsibility and authority by God for the nurture and education of their children. However, the state and the church also have their own

respective responsibilities in this area. The state has a justice obligation to see to it that *all* children of *all* citizens have an equal opportunity to the good education parents desire for their children as well as to protect children from abusive and harmful forms of education, even in the home. The church, in its proclamation and teaching, provides families and society with biblical norms for living that are focused on God. As the body of Christ in the world, the church preaches, teaches, and practices neighbor love. In this, it shares the state's concern for justice, equal opportunity, and protection of children.

Even with some shared concerns, however, state and church use quite different means. The state has the legitimate coercive power to tax citizens so that there will be good schools available without penalty and barrier to all children in the community. The church uses preaching and moral suasion to encourage parents and citizens to do their respective duties. That is the reason the CRC has historically, *as a church*, supported Christian day schools. To argue that this is somehow inappropriate because parents are the responsible educators of children rather than the church would mean that the same argument should be made for government-mandated public schools being a violation of parental authority.

We took it as our task to make a renewed affirmation of this Reformed vision for our times. One additional point of clarification should be made here. The traditional emphasis in the Christian Reformed Church on the covenant as the ground for Christian day school education has two inseparable but still distinct components: the vows of parents and the vows of the congregation. Failure to note that distinction will result in confusion about our committee's mandate and conclusions. The baptism of children is, in the Reformed tradition, rooted in covenant. The baptismal vow made by parents is undeniably rooted in the covenant, and there is no debate about the responsibility thus accepted by parents to nurture their children in the faith. Historically, for the CRC and for many Reformed Christian parents today, the implication of this covenant belief and commitment means Christian day school education.

However, as we shall demonstrate in section IV of our report, the CRC as a denomination has, through its synods, also repeatedly affirmed the *communal*, covenantal character of Christian nurture of covenant youth. This communal, covenantal dimension of infant baptism is made explicit in the CRC liturgical form for infant baptism when the congregation is asked: "Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive these children in love, pray for them, help instruct them in the faith, and encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers?" What the congregational vow undoubtedly primarily has in mind is the faith nurture of children that takes place within the institutional church (Sunday school, catechism, youth groups). There are good reasons, however, for understanding this vow as extending to Christian day school education. In the Reformed understanding of Christ's lordship, faith and discipleship cannot be dualistically separated into two areas: the church and the rest of life. Christ is Lord of human culture and society, politics, business, and life in community as a citizen; these are all matters of discipleship. The church cannot be the primary agent for teaching children everything that they need to

know to be good citizens, prepared to contribute in constructive ways to the broader community. That is why schools have become distinctly differentiated institutions in our modern societies. Furthermore, as we shall demonstrate later in this report, faith nurture as well as leadership development in the Reformed community inseparably links church and school together. Reformed churches need well-educated leaders, leaders who have a good grasp of the Reformed worldview in its many implications and applications to life in today's complex society. Church leaders who are ignorant of or hostile to the Reformed worldview will not be effective leaders of Reformed churches. Reformed Christian schools that become distant from or at odds with the Reformed churches that supply them with children to be taught will not be able to retain their Reformed identity. Reformed churches and Reformed Christian schools are inextricably linked with each other. Finally, that this has always been the understanding of Reformed convictions about the implications of the covenant is clear from Church Order Article 71, which instructs councils to see to it that good Christian day school education is provided for the church's youth "according to the demands of the covenant." (See section V of this report.)

FAQ 2.1: On what basis is the vow of the congregation made at the time of baptism to "help instruct them in the faith" extended to Christian day school education? Isn't it about Sunday School, catechism, Gems, Cadets, and so forth?

A. Indeed the congregation's vow is first of all a promise to help nurture children by supporting parents and the educational activities of the church prayerfully as well as financially. However the following reasons can be given for extending it to a much broader understanding of Christian nurture, including Christian day schools.

1. A Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship involves all of life, including those areas for which the church does not train its youth but the school does.
2. The church and school need each other; Reformed churches need leaders educated as thinking Reformed Christians, and Reformed Christian schools need the support of pastors and other leaders in the church.
3. This is the historical understanding of a Reformed understanding of the covenant (Church Order Article 71).

In the committee's view, the heart of our *original* mandate is to restate for our church the present and future role of Church Order Article 71—what the congregation's vow at baptism means, how this translates into today's culture, and the conditions that are current in our church. Our task is not to set out the legalities of Article 71 but to articulate a renewed vision of the reason we have this article as part of the Church Order.

III. Reflections in light of Synod 2003

Synod 2003 adopted almost all the recommendations submitted to it by our committee. It stood firm with more than a century of CRC synodical tradition by "reaffirming the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to and promo-

tion of Reformed Christian day school education from the elementary level through college and university" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 619). Synod also reaffirmed the conviction "that the Reformed emphasis on covenant and the kingdom of God are foundational for Reformed Christian schools" and added the affirmation "that mission is an additional foundation block for Reformed Christian schools" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 620). Synod found a creative way of affirming this threefold foundation, honoring the best of the CRC's century-long tradition of church financial support for Christian education while at the same time addressing a pressing contemporary challenge for the CRC in today's world by encouraging "CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to assist students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity, special needs)" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 627). When synod urged CRC church councils "to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education" and provided as its first ground the covenantal principle that "Christian day school education is both a communal church responsibility and a parental commitment" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 626), it affirmed the heart of our committee's work in response to the mandate of Synod 2000. We are profoundly grateful for synod's affirmation of our work, and this revised report maintains the basic direction of the 2003 report, though we will not be repeating recommendations approved by Synod 2003 in the recommendations we submit to Synod 2005. What follows in this report and its recommendations to Synod 2005 that is revised or new arises specifically out of the additional mandate given to our committee by Synod 2003 and does not seek to alter or change direction but flows directly from it.

However, though synod found much in our report that it approved and the advisory committee kindly commented "we commend the committee for making an excellent beginning," it also took note of need for further reflection and clarification. In the words of the advisory committee:

No report, no matter how well written, is likely to address every issue that needs to be addressed, and that is also true of this report. In addition to the traditional theological grounds of covenant and kingdom, the report affirms that mission is an additional foundational block for Reformed Christian day schools. More needs to be written about the relationship between mission and Christian education and how this relationship should shape the task of Reformed Christian day schools. The report also does not distinguish among single-church/single-school situations, schools that draw the majority of their students from non-Reformed churches, and schools that enjoy the support of a cluster of Reformed churches.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 619)

Our committee acknowledges the need for further reflection and clarification and is willing to accept synod's additional mandate.

We wish to point out the significance of this additional concern of synod. What is remarkable is that the single-church, single-school situation and the reality that some schools draw the majority of their students from non-Reformed churches is now seen in some sense as the problem that the normal scenario and expectations of our report do not adequately address. We need to pause and note how remarkable and significant the dimensions of our additional mandate really are. When synod gave thanks to God for the blessing of more than a century of Reformed Christian education provided by CRCNA members and for the many dedicated parents, teachers, administrators, and supporters who have labored faithfully and sacrificially during this time, it

was probably not thinking that this new problem is precisely one of the most remarkable of these numerous blessings. For example, for the first century of the CRC's history the single-church, single-school situation was the norm in the CRC; cluster communities such as Grand Rapids, Chicago, and Patterson, N.J.—the locations of the first three Christian high schools in the CRC—were the exception. For sure, the situation where the majority of students in a Reformed Christian day school were non-CRC was rare, and the significant presence of nonethnically Dutch children was virtually nonexistent. What our committee is being asked to address is the question of how we come to terms with the incredible *success* of Christian education, particularly its significant expansion in the last twenty-five to thirty years beyond the boundaries of our predominantly ethnically Dutch CRC communities. There are two very important lessons for the CRC that need to be noted at this point:

- In light of this history of blessing, especially in terms of the CRC's successful witness to the value of Christian day school education beyond the confines of the CRC itself, it would have been a tragic failure of nerve (a loss of faith and courage) for the synod of the CRC and the denomination as a whole to waver in its robust affirmation of Christian education. The delegates of Synod 2003 did not waver but faithfully led synod to continue the tradition of such affirmation.
- While we must take seriously the threat to the future of Reformed Christian education posed by financial hardship and the high cost of such education, we need also remind ourselves that sacrificial giving for Christian education has also been a hallmark of the CRC tradition. We must neither exaggerate nor underestimate the reality of today's financial crisis, and, along with creative new solutions to financing—notably by recognizing the obligation of the entire church community to support Christian education—we also need to remind ourselves of the obligations of sacrificial stewardship.

We now briefly consider the relationship among church, school, and family in a Reformed Christian understanding. Persons unfamiliar with our denomination might well wonder what business it is of the annual synod of the CRC to be discussing Christian education because Reformed Christian day schools are not parochial schools owned and operated by CRC congregations. A more knowledgeable person might even ask whether such a discussion is not out of keeping with the spirit and perhaps even the letter of Church Order article 28: “[The] assemblies [of the CRC] shall transact *ecclesiastical matters only* and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner” (emphasis added). Engelhard and Hofman, in their *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (2001, pp. 165–66) state this principle and its biblical-theological rationale this way: “Although Christian people have a responsibility to serve the Lord in all spheres of life—physical sciences, education, political life, art, business, etc.—these are not to be regarded as ecclesiastical matters.” They cite H. Bouwman's *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* in confirmation: [Because] “the state, the home, and politics each had their own sphere of life given it by God . . . those cases which do not belong to the task of the church should not be treated at the ecclesiastical meetings. The church has no right to do that” (ibid., 166). This principle has become well-known among us thanks to the influence of Abraham Kuyper who popularized it under the rubric of sphere sovereignty.

FAQ 3.1: *What exactly is sphere sovereignty, and where does this term come from?*

A. Made popular by Abraham Kuyper, sphere sovereignty arose as a social doctrine in response to concerns about *state* control of non-state social spheres such as the family, schools, the arts, and so forth. It was a way of insisting on the liberty of citizens to live in these social spheres without inappropriate state intrusion. Social spheres, so Kuyper believed, were directly responsible to God and derived their legitimacy from God, not from the state. They were “sovereign [under God] in their own sphere.”

FAQ 3.2: *If we take sphere sovereignty seriously isn't Church Order Article 71 itself a violation of the principle? After all, here the church is telling parents how to educate their children. Isn't that an intrusion into family rights?*

A. This is a matter that is often misrepresented and misunderstood. Sphere sovereignty does not mean that when it comes to legitimate state interests (public health and safety, freedom from coercion and violence, and so forth) that the state may not intervene—e.g., in cases of domestic abuse, contagious diseases in a school, churches worshipping in unsafe buildings—as the servant of the public good. Sphere sovereignty never meant *laissez-faire*. So, too, with the church. While churches are off task and act inappropriately when they try to raise a family's children, they have every right and even duty to use *spiritual* means (proclamation, persuasion, witness, pastoral care) to help their own church members, including parents, live as obedient and faithful Christians. The church has a special interest in the education of its children. So no, Article 71 does not as such violate sphere sovereignty.

FAQ 3.3: *Okay, perhaps Church Order Article 71 does not imply the church's intrusion into the family. What about the school? Isn't the church here interfering with the sphere of the school?*

A. Not at all. Notice that the Church Order article encourages *parents* to establish Christian schools and have their children educated in accord with the Reformed confession and worldview of Christ's lordship over all things. The Church Order does not encourage or give permission to local church councils to *directly* try to govern the affairs of local, independent, parent-controlled, Reformed Christian schools. For example, the church has no business dictating to such a school what its curriculum should be or telling the school board when to hire or fire a teacher.

FAQ 3.4: *So, we have covered the church's relationship to the family and to the school. There is another dimension of sphere-sovereignty that is potentially troubling. From this doctrine, could we not conclude that it is wrong and even dangerous for Christian schools to accept any financial assistance from the government? Does the state then not improperly interfere in the sphere of the school as well as the family? And if so, the*

same applies to the church's helping fund Christian education through its diaconate.

A. The issue here is not financial assistance but *justice* and *control*. Don't forget that even the Dutch Reformed Christian schools, thanks to Abraham Kuyper, received and still get full funding as a matter of public justice. You do well to raise the issue, however. Schools that do get government money need to be wily as foxes as well as innocent as doves; money may come with strings attached. Whether that is also true with respect to church assistance is perhaps harder to say because churches, unlike governments, have only persuasive spiritual power rather than coercive sword power over Christian schools.

We do need to ask, therefore, whether the CRC ignores the principle of sphere sovereignty when it comes to the schooling of its children. The education of the church's children seems to stand on a somewhat different footing vis-à-vis the church as an institution than, say, the broader vocation of church members in the construction or agriculture business or in their civic and political stewardship. There is a Church Order article about schools and education; there is none about voting, jury duty, or contributing to domestic charities. Why is this so? What special interest does the church have in the education of its children, not just in faith-nurture but in the broader education for vocation and service in the kingdom of God? Why is education different, if not an exception to the broad, popularly understood notion of sphere sovereignty?

Our committee does believe that the education of the church's children is different from other social spheres and that the institutional or official church (as constituted by the offices Christ appointed) does have a special interest in Christian schooling. The links between the church and the family and thus also with the school are of a special sort. Consider, for example, how the church shares so many of the characteristics of both the biological and extended family and the school. The church is the family of God who is the Father of his people (Eph. 3:15; cf. Matt. 6: 8-15; Lord's Day 13, Q. and A. 33). The church as the household of God (Eph. 2:19) is to be led, ruled, and served by those who have proven themselves capable of doing the same in their own households (I Tim. 3:4, 5, 12, 15; 5:14). The church is also a school as the numerous references to the words *teach* and *teaching* in the New Testament make clear (see e.g., Col. 3:16; Eph. 4:20-24; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:11, 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2). It is, of course, a mistake to draw from these biblical images a precise contemporary sociology of institutions. That is not the purpose of scriptural revelation. At the same time, we may not overlook the fact that the church of Christ in its official and institutional form and role has, according to the New Testament, among other things a decidedly familial and schoolish character. In our modern social context where schools have become a distinct and separate sphere from the church and family, we are obliged to consider how these three relate to one another in their tasks and responsibilities.

In a preliminary way, we can say that the church has three related interests in actively engaging and seeking the well-being of the Christian school. At the most basic and pragmatic, the church needs educated leaders—leaders who have been trained not only in the Reformed faith in church but also in a Reformed worldview in the school. Here the identity and continuity of the Reformed confessional tradition is at stake. The stewardship of its riches cannot

be fulfilled by the official church alone; schools at all levels are essential to preserving and applying the broad historical heritage that is our legacy from the Reformation. For example, the Reformed tradition has a long history of reflection and practice on a whole host of important moral, social, political, and scientific issues going back to the Reformation itself. The official church can give and has given guidance in a broad sense (such as, for example, the 1991 synodical study committee report on creation and science), but it does not teach biology, chemistry, and physics, nor does it engage in historical scholarship with respect to science. For these tasks to be done well, in a manner in keeping with a Reformed worldview, Christian schools at all levels are essential.

Second, a broadly educated leadership is a critical component of the church's faithful witness to the world. If the church's leaders are unaware of what is going on in the world and are not able to interpret our world from a worldview that is Reformed, they cannot equip Reformed saints for ministry in the world (Eph. 4:12). This is the reason that Church Order Article 6 prescribes a solid theological training for its ministers, a training that has a liberal arts background as the prerequisite. When the CRC, in 1876, established Calvin Theological Seminary, a solid literary-preparatory program was an essential part of the training for CRC ministry. This requires schools that serve a larger purpose than only that of the official church's task.

Third, it is a fundamental responsibility of the official church to disciple the nations, beginning with its own members. In the Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship, following Jesus is not restricted to a personal and private matter of one's soul. Jesus is Lord and it is as Lord that he calls the church to disciple the nations. When God's people are sent out into the world, they must be fully equipped with all the treasures of faith, love, hope, and knowledge that the church as a whole possesses. Included in that treasury are jewels of knowledge and skill that only schools can pass on to our children. It is as a co-worker in equipping God's people for the mission of discipling the nations that the church has a vested interest, a high stake in the full range of education received by its children. Stated differently, it is the church's confession and task to proclaim to the whole world: Our world belongs to God! Practically speaking, the church cannot teach this truth by itself. It is in Christian schools that teachers fit children with the spectacles of the Bible so that they can notice the sparkles of light of Christ's kingdom in a dark world—sparkles on everything from asteroids to zebras, from economics to Ecuador—and learn to discern the difference between glitter and gold.

Perhaps the best way to get at the respective roles and mutual relationships of family, church, and school in the mission of God's kingdom is to consider them from the point of view of the child who is being taught in the faith. When devout new parents send out birth announcements, they bear witness to the world that "God has given us a child." For this reason, because that child belongs to God, she is taken to an assembly of God's people in worship and given the sign and seal of covenantal promise in the water of baptism. At the time of baptism, parents vow in reliance on the Holy Spirit *and with the help of the Christian community* (emphasis added), to do all in their power to instruct her in the Christian faith and to lead her by their example into the life of Christian discipleship. In response, the congregation also promises to receive this child in love, pray for her, help instruct her in the faith, and encourage and

sustain her in the fellowship of believers ("Service for Baptism," *Psalter Hymnal* [CRC Publications, 1987], p. 955).

The faith nurture of the child referred to in the preceding vignette can be considered from a number of different angles. The primary responsibility here lies with the parents. However, as Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78 remind us, telling the children of the next generation "the glorious deeds of the LORD and his might / and the wonders he has done" (Ps. 78:4) in order that "you and your children and your children's children, may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long" (Deut. 6:2), is a covenantal, communal, and intergenerational responsibility. The responsibility of teaching the next generation is a communal responsibility because the *reality* that is to be passed on is a covenantal, communal reality—"I am your God, and you are my people." What parents (and the congregation) promise in baptismal vows is to nurture their children into the community of God's people. Baptism means that God's children are entrusted to us to bring them up as God's children. The baptized child is not only a member of family X but, *in the first place*, part of God's family, and it is here that we must see the link between baptism of children and the issue of Christian education.

Our Reformed understanding of baptism is difficult for North Americans. Even our Christian culture tends toward individualism and consumerism—my faith is my choice. In this context (thinking of baptism as God's sign and seal on us, God's action by which he claims us and our children as his own, promises his grace and favor to us, and incorporates us into the body of Christ and the narrative of his covenantal story with us), all of this is foreign to the spiritual and ecclesiastical climate of our age. It is this story of God and his people that must guide all the education provided for our children, whether in the home, the church, or the school. The nurture of a baptized child is to be a nurture into the story of God and his people. Baptized children are educated *narratively* (beginning with basic Bible stories at home and in Sunday school) with the goal that they become *active participants* in that story, that they accept as their own the mission of God's people in his world. This full vision of baptism is summarized well by the ecumenical statement of the World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* ("Baptism" section, par. # 7):

Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. Through the gifts of faith, hope and love, baptism has a dynamic which embraces the whole of life, extends to all nations, and anticipates the day when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

All Christian nurture, therefore, serves the end of this covenantal, intergenerational narrative; the story of God and his people in his world. Whether we think of the home, the church, or the school and the respective task of each, or how each should relate to the others, this basic vision must remain in the forefront. One of the consequences is that each of the three spheres should not think of the other(s) as competitors nor of the education of God's children as somehow primarily for our sphere. When the church considers God's children as belonging primarily to the official or institutional church and as candidates for ordained ministry or monastic life, it arrogates to itself a proprietorship that belongs to the Lord of the church alone. Parents, however, may also be

guilty of trying to own their children as when they pressure children into careers and vocations that will enhance the family's prestige or wealth rather than seeking first the kingdom of God. It is such circumstances that our Lord himself warned about with his disturbing and hard words about needing to hate our father and mother if we are serious about following him (Luke 14:26). The gospel of the kingdom relativizes all our earthly and human relationships, including in our family. Finally, schools, too, may be guilty of trying to own the children of the community as for example when they schedule school activities in such a way that family life and church activities become almost impossible. The only antidote to such possessiveness is the spiritual challenge to seek first the kingdom of God, to remember that all education, in home, in church, and in school, is to tell the story of God and his people in the world for nurturing Christian discipleship.

As we consider the obligations of Christian discipleship and wrestle with the perception of a tension or conflict between Christian education and missions or evangelism, it is very important that we listen to, and try to understand, the concerns raised on this point in our churches. There is both a sociological and a theological (evangelism) dimension to this issue. We will consider the sociological angle first. We need to acknowledge that there are sometimes unintended negative consequences to our best efforts of Christian discipleship. There is, for example, the potential negative consequence that vigorous support for Christian day school education may isolate and separate its supporters from the rest of the local community. This can happen within congregations where distinctions may arise between Christian school children and public school children or, in cases of full congregational support for Christian education, between the congregation and the larger local civic community. We should not draw the conclusion here that Christian day school education is therefore a mistake, but we do need to recognize that the dynamics we describe here are real and that congregations cannot ignore them. Recognition and acknowledgement are the necessary first steps toward avoiding conflict and bringing reconciliation and healing when conflict does arise. In addition, when they become aware of this social phenomenon, churches and schools both need to find creative ways to encourage children as well as adults toward constructive interaction with the local civic communities of which they are a part. Cooperative community service projects, generous availability of physical resources for community events, sponsoring Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, and so forth are significant ways of mitigating the risks of isolation and separation.

The tension we are describing can be popularly summarized as the conflict between two competing values: (1) internal nurture and growth of our own children and (2) reaching out beyond ourselves to lost and hurting people with the gospel. It is worth noting that the laudable goal of reaching out beyond our own community and tradition can also have unintended consequences. It is possible to be so self-conscious and defensive about our own identity as Reformed people, particularly when we link it to the particularity of Dutch ethnic identity, that we devalue its importance, minimize it, and eventually lose it altogether. If the perception takes hold that being Reformed is an obstacle to reaching the lost with the gospel, then, so the argument would go, we should jettison that which is Reformed. Once again, we caution synod and the church: We should not draw the conclusion here that evangelism and

missions are necessarily problematic for Reformed Christians because reaching out beyond confessional boundaries jeopardizes confessional Reformed identity. Yet, we do need to recognize that the potential dangers we describe here are real, especially in North America where the church world is characterized by intense market pressures that place high demands on confessional integrity and denominational loyalty (see more discussion on this point in section VI, A, 1 and 2). Recognition and acknowledgement are necessary here as well if we hope to avoid conflict in the churches and to bring reconciliation and healing when conflict does arise.

Bearing this in mind, along with the preceding positive discussion of the relationship between our commitment to both evangelism and mission, in summary, we alert synod and the CRC to the possibility that even our most obedient efforts of Christian discipleship may have unintended consequences. On the one hand, support for Christian day school education can have the social effect of isolating our children and supporting communities and, on the other, a single-minded zeal for reaching out can take place at the expense of Reformed Christian identity. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 114 reminds us that even our best works in this life are corrupted with sin.

With that brief introduction and background, we can begin to address the first issue in our expanded mandate: to explore “the nature of the relationship between the church’s commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church’s work of evangelism.” We must begin by stating clearly what we mean by key terms such as *evangelism* and *mission*, particularly because these two words in particular were a source of some confusion in the reception of our 2003 report where we used them practically as synonyms. In the broadest sense, we understand mission, as in the expression “the mission of God’s people in the world,” to be the full-orbed, comprehensive discipleship of those who follow Jesus Christ in their individual lives as well as corporately. This idea could be stated alternatively in terms of submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ or being active citizens of the kingdom of God. Within that broad vision, the official church has a specific task, one given to it by the Lord and given to no other institution or people. The church’s mandate and its basis was clearly given by our Lord when he ascended into heaven: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20). When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the emboldened apostles proclaimed the good news of the risen and ascended Christ, called people to repentance, baptized, and established new communities beginning in Judea and Samaria and expanding to the ends of the earth. Over time, the forms and institutional structures of these communities became more fixed with offices and specified tasks (see lists in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, the Pastoral Epistles). These offices and tasks—preaching, teaching, disciplining—have one goal: “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

Evangelism is a circumscribed and specifically defined task within this broad responsibility. Based on the Greek *εὐαγγελίζω* = to announce or proclaim

good news; εὐαγγέλιον = good news, gospel; the word *evangelism* refers to any explicit announcement of the gospel message calling a sinner to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Evangelism's goal is to yield the response, "What must we then do?" (Acts 2:37) to which some variation of the apostle Peter's response on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) is the only possible answer: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Although it has the potential of adding to confusion rather than clarifying, we need to point out that much missiological literature today will use the plural *missions* as a synonym for *evangelism* and thus distinguish both terms from the singular *mission* that is then generally understood as defined above.

FAQ 4.1: Isn't the use of the word evangelism in such a narrow sense really non-Reformed usage? I have always been taught that to restrict it to what I guess looks to me like soul saving is really sort of fundamentalist or evangelical and not properly Reformed.

A. Here is another example of common confusion. There has been an understanding by some in the CRC, mistakenly invoking the memory of Abraham Kuyper, to go to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and infer from the lordship of Christ ("all authority in heaven and on earth") that evangelism means nothing more than bearing witness by showing how Jesus is Lord of my life. On this understanding, explicit proclamation of the good news with the intention to persuade someone to believe is only one way of doing evangelism. Other ways include working for justice; being an honest businessman, a faithful spouse, a good parent, a good steward of the environment; and so forth. To the degree that these are all witnesses to the lordship of Christ, which is the basis of the Great Commission, evangelism is as broad as life itself.

This is an example of a half-truth that becomes a problematic untruth. Of course Jesus is Lord, and our lives must honor him as Lord. To the degree that they do so, they bear witness to him. However, an honest examination of the Great Commission, not to mention the examples of the book of Acts, makes it clear that our efforts in evangelism—proclaiming the good news—must be more intentional, more explicit and have conversion, baptism, and discipleship as their goal. The claim, sometimes made by some Reformed people that evangelism is fundamentalist or perhaps even Arminian is often, we must shamefacedly acknowledge, little more than an excuse for failing to witness explicitly to our faith and for our Lord.

What then are some of the key issues we must address as we consider "the nature of the relationship between the churches' commitment to Reformed Christian schools and the churches' work of doing evangelism" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 630)? It should be noted that we were not asked to spell out for the school (or the home, for that matter) what its proper attitude and relationship should be to the church. Our mandate is rather straightforward: Assuming that the church has a commitment to Christian day schools and to doing evangelism, what is the proper relationship between these two commitments? Later on in our report, we will consider in greater detail some of the reasons why

communities experience tension between these two tasks, but now we merely state the principle. On the basis of what we have stated thus far in our report, we are comfortable and convicted about making the following claim: Christian Reformed churches have a responsibility to both be actively supportive of Christian day school education *and* to engage in the work of evangelism. It is a serious error to posit one of these responsibilities over against the other in order to diminish its importance or discourage participation by members of the congregation. Support for Christian education should never be used to undermine the work of evangelism, and evangelistic outreach should never be given as a ground for failing to support Christian day school education.

Granting that neither Christian education nor evangelistic outreach should be allowed to trump each other in contending for the allegiance and support of CRC congregations and members does not mean that there will never be disagreement about degrees of support and priorities within the overall mission of the church community. All of us have limited ranges of vision and none of us see with the full eye of God, including the needs of the church and world and what specific responsibilities flow from them. Therefore, keeping in mind the overall mission of God and his people in the world and the specific tasks of the official church in particular, we believe that it is important for synod to remind the churches and their members that mutual respect for each others' commitments, gifts, and interests is called for as the best way of promoting that mission.

The section we have now completed raised many issues and did not attempt to provide answers to all the dimensions of the questions we raised. That is only appropriate for a synodical committee such as ours. While synods can provide leadership for the church in setting forth a framework to assist churches in wrestling with these issues, these are matters that must be resolved at the level of local congregations. We will be coming back to the issues raised in section III above. Later, in section VII, we will be considering in greater detail in a very practical way of how the church and school can cooperate with families in fulfilling the mission of God's people in the world, including what role the school may have in assisting the specific calling of evangelism. At this point, however, we shall reinforce the basic vision just set forth by looking at the history of the CRC's support for Christian day school education.

IV. The church and Christian education in the Reformed tradition

Throughout its history, the CRC has consistently supported the cause of Christian day schools. Church Order Article 71 places the responsibility for supporting Christian education in the hands of all church councils (pre-2003 wording):

Christian Schools: The Council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian Schools and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.

Similarly, according to Church Order Article 41, each council is to be asked, among other things, at each classis meeting, "Does the council diligently promote the cause of Christian education from elementary school through institutions of high learning?" According to Synod 1936, the expression "support the cause of Christian schools" means that "it is the duty of the

council to use every proper means to the end that a Christian school may be established where it does not exist and to give whole hearted and unreserved moral backing to existing Christian schools *and* a measure of financial help in case of need" (*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 36-37). The remainder of this section of our report provides an overview of the CRC's commitment to support Christian education financially as well as morally. Only a few years after the establishment of the CRC in 1857, the vision of Christian education was firmly in place. Synod 1870 declared its strong commitment to the duty that every congregation do its utmost to see to it that Christian education was available for its children:

Primary education is discussed with [the firmly expressed conviction by all present] that the school is the [nursery of and for] the Church. It is [therefore] the duty of [each congregation to see to it that they establish a free school], and if this be impossible, [to do everything in their power to achieve education that is both Reformed and in the Dutch language.] This the Assembly impresses on Consistories and Churches.

(*Acts of Synod 1870*, Art. 36)

We call synod's attention here to three features of this declaration still relevant to our times. First, the close relationship between church and school is expressed in the intimate terms of family life: "the school is [the nursery of and for] the Church." Second, the education offered is to be *free* from control by either the state or the church. Third, the education provided is to be distinctively Reformed.

Schools of course require teachers, and it is noteworthy that only one year later (1871) the broadest assembly of the CRC not only supported the *idea* of common teacher training but apparently was committed to denomination-wide financial support for such a venture.

Classis Michigan proposes that teachers be trained for work in our schools from our own Reformed group. This idea is explained further by the Rev. VanderWerp. The need for this brings about a long discussion, and all agree that this is a pressing question. The Assembly decides that they should look for a good leader, and they find that a Mr. H. Baron seems to have the necessary qualifications. The Assembly is thus keeping him in mind.

(*Acts of Synod 1871*, Art. 21)

From subsequent minutes of the annual CRC general assembly, it appears that a denomination-wide coordinated effort for teacher education was proving difficult to achieve. In 1872, the matter was referred back to congregations (and a different person was recommended for the instructional post than had been announced in the previous year):

Art. 21. (p. 134) of the previous Session is brought up for discussion, which deals with training of teachers from our own Church group. The discussion and the decision: Congregations shall have this problem referred to them and give it their careful attention. A Mr. F. Winterberg is recommended for this.

(*Acts of Synod 1872*, Art. 10)

The following year (1873), the general assembly reaffirmed its strong commitment to establishing Christian schools and established a denomination-wide accountability for congregations to implement this by requiring each congregation to report on its efforts at the next session.

Return to Art. 10 concerning Primary Education. A discussion on this, with the result that the need of free Chr. Ref. Schools be strongly recommended to the

Congregations, and that the Congregations take steps to bring such schools into being. Also each Congregation is to report at the next Session what has been accomplished by it along these lines. Sunday Schools shall also be organized in all the Churches.

(*Acts of Synod 1873, Art. 8*)

From the reports given at the 1874 assembly, it is apparent that progress in establishing Christian schools was slow. The assembly vigorously reaffirmed (“insists in the strongest way possible”) the commitment to Christian day school education. The expansion of the mandate of Sunday schools to include reading instruction (“as a last resort”) should also be noted.

Article 8 of the previous Minutes is first brought up for discussion. This deals with Primary Christian Education, and that in free institutions, as well as training in our Sunday Schools. The President inquires if the Congregations have made any progress along that line. It appears that in Grand Rapids there is such a day school, but other Congregations state that little progress has been made as yet, although most Congregations do have Sunday Schools. Since the Assembly is thoroughly convinced that there is a need of free Christian Schools, it insists in the strongest possible way that they be brought into being and fostered. In those Congregations where it is impossible at this time to have such educational instruction, it is permitted to teach Reading in the Sunday Schools, but only as a last resort.

(*Acts of Synod 1874, Art. 10*)

The suggestion of the assembly over several years that congregations unable to establish schools ought to teach reading in the Sunday school ran into an unexpected obstacle. When the 1875 assembly discussed the progress of Christian education in the denomination, it first had to come to terms with an objection from the Grand Rapids congregation—such education on the Sabbath would be a violation of the fourth commandment. In response to the objection “the Assembly judges that instruction given in such a way is not a transgression of the fourth commandment,” the president of synod explained that the unique circumstances of the church in question made some instruction in spelling, reading, and Holland language instruction necessary and that this would “be carried on only as a last resort” (*Acts of Synod 1875, Art. 4*). The assembly received reports from seventeen congregations with mixed results indicated. The president of synod

encourages the delegates to be diligent, and that in those areas where there has been no teaching in the Holland language a beginning can be made in a very small way by acquiring a Classroom as a place for teachers and teaching, for, after all, with the blessing of the Lord, this project is bound to succeed. In general it appears that some progress had been made since the previous session in the establishment of schools, and one hopes that the desired ends may be reached under God’s guidance and with his blessing, as in the case in the Netherlands.

(*Acts of Synod 1875, Art. 4*)

After six years of discussion and committed resolutions, the responsibility for financial support of local Christian schools was placed in the hands of each congregation by the assembly of 1876 (the assembly that also gave the green light for establishing Calvin Theological Seminary). The assembly did, however, commit denominational funds (via the church magazine *De Wachter*) to promoting Christian education.

Section three of the Agenda is now up for discussion. The Assembly takes up the consideration of the establishment of a fund for Reformed Holland Schools. After much discussion over this matter, the following is decided upon: That in each

Church a receptacle be placed, or by means of “penny societies” a collection of monies be made. The last part, concerning the school matter at Cleveland mentioned in the Agenda, is sanctioned, namely that articles be written repeatedly and inserted in the “*Wachter*” expressing the needs of Christian church schools and instruction in the Holland Language. Many of the delegates promise to use their talents for the benefit of the Editor and for educating the public.

(*Acts of Synod 1876*, Art. 47)

Four years later, Synod 1880 again discussed the matter of encouraging and supporting Christian education, but the resolution seems less principled and more attuned to the issue of Americanization.

The question is raised if any means can be put into practice to advance primary Christian education. It is stated that it would be very desirable to have Christian Schools where both Holland and English are taught, so that our children need not be ashamed of their education. The State sanctions such schools.

(*Acts of Synod 1880*, Art. 62)

The enthusiasm of synodical gatherings for Christian education appears not to have been contagious as the following resolution by the 1881 assembly shows.

The final matter of the Agenda is discussed: The Synod returns to the previous ruling of the Synod of 1880, in the matter of education, and the best methods of fostering Holland Christian Education. After an earnest consideration of this matter: Since the parents, on the whole, do not see the need of Holland Christian Education, (to the best of their ability) the delegates promise to insert Articles in the Church publication the “*Wachter*” periodically under the caption “Holland Christian Education,” to prepare families for same, and to return to a discussion of this question at a later date. Where it is possible to obtain such instruction for the Children at this time, every effort should be made to support and foster such.

(*Acts of Synod 1881*, Art. 56)

Synod’s resolve remained firm, and once again the church’s periodical was designated to continue its role as cheerleader for Christian education.

A significant turn in the Christian education discussion took place in 1892. Synod received the following requests:

- a) From Classis Hudson: What can the Synod do to stimulate an interest in the Holland Christian Reformed Church in America in regard toward Christian Schools?
- b) From the Consistory of Roseland (Chicago): The Synod impress upon our Congregations, especially the largest and the wealthiest the need for the establishment of Christian Schools.

(*Acts of Synod 1892*, Art. 22)

Synod apparently now had a standing denominational Committee on Christian Education. Its report to Synod 1892 was accepted and includes the following three recommendations.

The Committee on Christian Education presents its report which is accepted by the Synod.

- a) The Synod calls the attention of the Ministers and of the Consistories to take to heart, with all their strength and their gifts, the support and the construction of Christian Schools.
- b) The Synod recommends the organization of Christian School Societies for the purpose of fostering Christian Education.
- c) When these Societies come into being, the Synod will give them its moral support. The Society is to be organized with the Name “The Society for the Advancement of Christian Education on Reformed Principles.”

(*Acts of Synod 1892*, Art. 23)

This decision is significant in that the *content* of Christian education is now less focused on the Dutch language and the Reformed confessional tradition and more on Reformed worldview (Reformed principles). This Kuyperian emphasis on a Reformed world-and-life view was strengthened and elaborated in the following declaration of Synod 1898:

Not a general, but a specifically Reformed instruction is the requirement for our children. Indeed, no educational system is satisfactory, but the acknowledgment of the necessity of regeneration, and additionally the acknowledgment of the covenant relationship in which God has placed our children, are the principles from which education must proceed. Christian education according to Reformed principles is the incontrovertible duty of Reformed Christians. All ministers and elders must labor to the utmost of their power in the promotion of Christian education wherever and whenever possible. The grounds for these declarations are:

- (1) God's Word requires that children be trained in the fear and admonition of the Lord.
- (2) Parents at the time of the baptism of the children have promised before the Lord and the congregation to do this.
- (3) there may be no separation between civil, social and religious life, education, and nurture.
- (4) Christian education promotes the honor of our King who has been given all dominion in heaven and on earth, including the realms of education and nurture.

(Acts of Synod 1898, p. 38)

The statement of 1898 represents a conclusion to three decades of discussion in the CRC about Christian education. The issue does not feature prominently in synodical discussions again until the 1930s. However, we need to take note of a significant change in Church Order Article 21 (now Art. 71) on Christian education. The original church order of Dort (1618-1619) reads as follows: "Everywhere consistories shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters, who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism." This wording assumed a close link among the state, the church, and schools. However, the situation in the United States with its clear separation of church and state presented the church with a new challenge—to encourage the establishment of free, parent-controlled Christian day schools. Accordingly, Synod 1914 altered Church Order Article 21 to read: "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." Finally the revised Church Order of 1965, in the renumbered article 71, shifted the focus to the members of the congregation.

The consistory shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.

Aside from the Church Order change in 1914, synodical discussion of Christian education was insignificant until 1934 when Classis Sioux Center asked Synod 1934 to interpret the question pertaining to Christian Schools as found under Church Order Article 41 (see *Acts of Synod 1934*, p. 137). Three questions were asked. They were:

1. Which schools are meant?

2. What does the expression “support the Christian Schools” signify?
3. What is classis to do about it if in its judgment a consistory does not support such schools according to its ability?

As to the first question, synod is asked to express whether *schools* refers to the primary schools or to technical and professional schools.

As to the second question, synod is requested to state whether a consistory is duty bound to further the cause of Christian education by doing all in its power to bring into existence and to support a Christian school in a locality accessible to the children of the congregation or whether the question is satisfactorily answered when a consistory states that it supports Christian educational institutions. A committee was appointed by Synod 1934 to help provide answers to the questions raised re Church Order Article 41 and the meaning of *schools*. Synod 1936 received the report of this committee and adopted the following declaration:

Synod declare[s] that it is in full accord with the answers given by the Committee of 1934. It is convinced that the answers are of vital importance to the life of the Church. “Schools” in article 41 is identical with “schools” mentioned in Article 21, that is, free Christian schools, supported by the parents. Our Church stands committed to the cause of Christian education in every unit of our educational system. Consistories, therefore, are to do all in their power to bring about the erection and to promote the growth of Christian schools. To take offerings for the cause while no attempt is made to establish a Christian school does not satisfy the requirements of Article 41 and 21. Consistories who do not put forth wholehearted endeavors to bring about the erection and maintenance of Christian Schools should be admonished until they repent of their failure to do all they can. Accordingly, Synod answers the questions of Classis Sioux Center in the following manner:

(a) The term “schools” in the phrase “The cause of Christian Schools” in Article 41 refers to the Christian primary and grammar and high schools (or Academies) where the bulk of our children get their general school education as distinguished from technical and professional schools, while the college would fall under the question of Article 41 in the measure in which it might become the common instrument of a general education.

(b) The expression “support the cause of Christian Schools” means that it is the duty of the consistory to use every proper means to the end that a Christian School may be established where it does not exist (Article 21), and to give wholehearted and unreserved moral backing to existing Christian schools and a measure of financial help in case of need.

(c) If, in the judgment of Classis, a Consistory does not support the cause of Christian Schools, Classis should continue earnestly to admonish such a consistory publicly in its classical meeting and privately through the church visitors until it truly repents.

(*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 36-37)

To wrap up this survey, it should be noted that Synods 1951 and 1953 affirmed two different sets of principles of Christian education and recommended them to the members of the church for study. The 1951 affirmation concerned nine principles that had been adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) of 1949 (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 44). A study committee appointed to study these principles (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 45) reported to Synod 1953 with a reshaped statement of five principles:

- I. Believing parents are called of God to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord.
- II. Parents may enlist the aid of others in the task of educating their children, but the responsibility for this education continues with the parents and is nontransferable.
- III. Catechetical instruction is a particular ministration of the Word instituted by the Church for covenant children.
- IV. Education in the way of the Covenant includes the whole of the child's nurture as well as the development of his talents for God's glory.
- V. Christian Education must foster the development of the principles of Christ in every area of life

(*Acts of Synod 1953*, pp. 507-9)

Synod 1953 judged that further cultural and analytic study of the RES principles was needed and appointed a new study committee that reported in 1955 (*Acts of Synod 1955*, pp. 193-200). The 1955 report called attention to a desperate crisis in education in its "failure to achieve mastery of the fundamentals of human knowledge, and the absence of biblical truth as normative for thinking and acting, generally known as Secularism" (*Acts of Synod 1955*, pp. 194-95). The report responded directly to this perceived threat in crisis-laden language that sounds remarkably contemporary:

In the face of an educational situation that is becoming daily more desperate, the church's testimony must be unmistakably clear. The Christian church, true to the God Who has revealed Himself both in His general and special revelation, is called upon to interpret all of human endeavor in terms of this revelation. Only education founded on the Word of God can overcome the impasse in educational theory and practice associated with the concept of modern education. Christian education has the true goal, the true standard, and the true motivation. The true goal is the forming of personality as image of God. The true standard is the truth of God's Word. The true motivation is the "new obedience" which is the obedience of faith.

The Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency that can make Christian education effective in the totality of life. Meanwhile the Christian Reformed Church considers the family the foundation of all educational effort and charges the parents, on the basis of the covenant promise and mandate, with full educational responsibility. And she employs catechesis to instruct the youth of the church in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

In view of her great interest in education it is well that the Christian Reformed Church periodically reaffirm her position concerning education and express herself in a way which is relevant to the problems and issues of the day. In keeping with its mandate, therefore, your committee submits the following declaration of principles, based on holy Writ in its normative, directive, and mandatory character as summarized for us in the three forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches.

(*Acts of Synod 1955*, pp. 195-96)

The report went on to draft seven basic commitments in Christian education, including the following important covenantal ground:

Children born of Christian parents are members of the Church of Christ. They are children of the promise. God calls them His own (Gen. 17:7; Mark 10:16; Acts 2:39). In the providence of God they have been placed in covenantal relationship to Christ and their education must be in keeping with this relationship. It must be education in Christ. Secular education divorces an area of life of the child in Christ from Christ Himself. Christian education is education in Christ for those who are in God's providence placed in relationship to Christ. *A covenantal relationship demands a covenantal education.*

(*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 197; emphasis added)

While the primary responsibility for education rests upon the parents, the church also has a responsibility, thanks to the covenant and the lordship of Christ over all things. This responsibility has a flexibility in that it must be applied differently in changed historical circumstances. The report also appealed to a new ground found in the liturgical form for infant baptism:

The family and the church are institutions called into being by divine mandate. This cannot be said of the modern school. It is a product of human civilization, and therefore a social institution. Formal schooling as we know it today has become a necessity in the complex society of the modern day. Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon others to assist them in their task. *This is recognized in the Form for the Baptism of Infants in these words, "...and cause them to be instructed therein."*

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 199; emphasis added)

The subject matter of the elementary and secondary schools must present a medium, a milieu, in which the covenant child's life in Christ can develop to its fullness in all areas of living. No area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and his Christ for the covenant child. *It is for this reason that the Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency to make the Christlike life effective in the totality of life for every covenant child* (emphasis added).

The church is obligated to see to it that parents as members of the church fulfill their promise made at the baptism of their children. *Since the Christian school is the only agency that can provide a Christian education for the youth of the church, the church is duty bound to encourage and assist in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools.*

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 199; emphasis added)

In conclusion, we note that the Christian Reformed Church from the beginning has clearly and consistently endorsed and supported the cause of Christian day school education. On several occasions, it has even voiced support for broad denominational financial support as well as congregational financial support for the cause. There is clear precedent for similar endorsement today.

V. Biblical-theological foundations for Christian education

The last time a Christian Reformed synod dealt with the matter of Christian day school education by way of a study committee report (in 1955), it adopted a statement of principles that included a *reason for* as well as suggestions concerning the *content* of Reformed education. Because these *grounds* and *content* are as important today as they were then and because the 1955 statement in our judgment remains valid for us today, we begin by highlighting the key ideas from the passages cited in the previous section of our report. According to the report, the primary responsibility for educating children of the church community rests with the parents (Deut. 6; Ps. 78). This obligation is placed upon parents by the covenantal promises they make when they present their children for baptism:

Children born of Christian parents are members of the Church of Christ. . . . In the providence of God they have been placed in covenantal relationship to Christ and their education must be in keeping with this relationship. It must be education in Christ. . . . A covenantal relationship demands a covenantal education.

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 197)

The divine covenant is not made with solitary individuals or even individual families but with the entire body of believers—with the *people of God*. The church community thus also has responsibilities. This begins with discipling parents to encourage them in remaining true to the vows they made when their children were baptized. The church must also provide active support for the education that it encourages its members to receive:

Since the Christian school is the only agency that can provide a Christian education for the youth of the church, the church is duty bound to encourage and assist in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools.

(*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199)

It is here that synod introduces what we today refer to as contextualization. The circumstances of the present time determined by historical developments must be taken into account. For synod, this meant that, while parents retain the primary responsibility for their children's education, the complexity of modern society makes it impossible for them to do it by themselves. Though the school as an institution cannot be said to arise from a divine mandate (as for example marriage and family are) and is instead a historical, culturally dependent institution, synod believed that schools were necessary in the complex society of the modern day. Concretely, in synod's judgment, this meant that

Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon others to assist them in their task. This is recognized in the Form for the Baptism of Infants in these words: . . . "and cause them to be instructed therein."

(*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199)

The preceding quote, with its oblique reference to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, provides a hint about the synod's address to the curricular *content* of a Reformed Christian education. All areas of human life are to be included in the purview of a Christian education; all culture is potentially open to obedient Christian discipleship. This cultural mandate, however, must be understood within the frame of Christ as Lord over all:

The subject matter of the elementary and secondary schools must present a medium, a milieu, in which the covenant child's life in Christ can develop to its fullness in all areas of living. No area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and His Christ for the covenant child. It is for this reason that the Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency to make Christ-like life effective in the totality of life for every covenant child.

(*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199)

In sum then, considering the brief account given above along with the historical overview of CRC denominational support for Christian day school education (in section IV), it is apparent that the Reformed conviction about God's *covenant* with his people, especially signified in infant baptism, has consistently been the *primary ground* for the CRC's commitment to Christian education.

What is particularly valuable about the 1955 report is the way in which it blends the traditionally strong Reformed emphasis on covenant with another characteristic Reformed doctrine, the kingdom of God. This emphasis on the lordship of Christ over all things not only provides additional support in providing solid doctrinal reasons for Christian education, it also links up with

its *content*. Because Christ is Lord of all things and education is an integral part of our social and cultural world, he must also be Lord of the school. This requires Christian schools. This education, however, must be *in Christ* and must be conducted in such a manner as to acknowledge that Christ is Lord, that “no area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and His Christ for the covenant child” (*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199). So then, as we consider the last statement made by the CRC synod about Christian education in 1955, we see that it rests on two theological pillars—the *covenant* and the *kingdom* of God, and these two realities are inextricably joined together in God’s mission plan for all creation.

We need now to consider whether these familiar and much-loved staple doctrines of the Reformed faith are still adequate bases for supporting the task of Christian education today. It is unarguable that they are still *necessary*; we must consider whether they remain *sufficient*. In recent years, the CRC has been appropriately challenged to become more mission-minded and diverse, to reach out beyond the confines of its historically Dutch ethnic community and engage the larger world with the gospel of the kingdom. To draw the contrast most sharply using the distinctions drawn above, we could say that while a covenantal emphasis seems to focus attention on “our own children” (with *our* confusingly taken as ethnically *ours* as well as confessionally *ours*), the emphasis on missions and evangelism focuses the church’s and the school’s attention on outsiders. Stated differently, it could also be formulated in terms of setting the mission mandate of Matthew 28:19-20 (“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations”) over against the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, with the former having a decided priority over the latter. Missions and evangelism would then be understood as *more* important than Christian education.

Our committee considers this line of thinking to be incorrect and not very helpful. While a case can be made that our rationale for Christian education must go beyond what we have historically understood it to be in the Christian Reformed Church, particularly in paying attention to outreach and diversity, setting missions in opposition to covenant and kingdom is both a theological and a practical mistake. Theologically, separating the so-called cultural mandate from the great commission or missionary mandate is problematic because both are rooted in kingdom and covenant promise. This can be seen from the following parallel:

**Cultural Mandate
(Genesis 1:27-30)**

Basis: Authority of God the Creator
of Heaven and earth
Royal grant (vs. 30)

Commission: Govern, subdue, rule

Promise: Blessing (vs. 28)

**Mission Mandate
(Matthew 28:18-20)**

All authority in heaven and
earth

Make disciples, baptize, teach
obedience

“I am with you always”

In both Genesis and Matthew, the Sovereign One royally commissions his representatives, gives them a task that involves establishing the king’s dominion over the earth and people, and covenantally promises his blessing.

However we understand the practical outworking of this in the life of God's people, it is clear that theologically these two are inseparably linked in the providential purpose of God for his people, i.e., in his creation and redemption plan for their well-being. Instead, we ought to look for a way, theologically to unite them rather than set them over against each other. Later in this same section, we will propose the category of narrative as the way to achieve this.

Setting missions in opposition to covenant is also a practical mistake. When we diminish the importance of nurturing covenant children, we slight the Lord to whom they belong. Children of the faith community are integral members of the flock and are loved by the Good Shepherd, loved to the point of his laying down his life for them (John 10). It is a mistake to set missions and / or evangelism over against the ongoing discipling of Christ's sheep and lambs. As our Lord reminded his disciples in one of his postresurrection appearances, while we are fishing (for men), we must also feed the flock (John 21). Where obedience to either one of these two mandates for the church is inadequate, God's people need to be prodded to greater faithfulness. Renewed obedience in one area should not be at the expense of another important task. Our obligation as a church to evangelize and to educate is not an either / or but a both / and. Here we would remind synod once more of our earlier observation that Christian schools have been an important avenue by which leaders have been formed whose public witness has been a blessing to the world as well as to our church.

In the second place, the claim that Christian schools impede evangelistic efforts ignores the school's own important missiological significance. Christian Reformed folk have more than a century of experience in Christian education, education that stretches from kindergarten to post-baccalaureate graduate education. At a time when evangelicals in North America are establishing a rather remarkable number of Christian alternatives to public school education, often without adequate theological or philosophical foundations (see Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*), Reformed Christians have a solemn obligation to the kingdom of Christ to share the insights of this rich legacy of practice and reflection. As we think about the Christian schools initiated and supported by Christian Reformed folk and the importance of the CRC's Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary to the "Opening of the Evangelical Mind" (Alan Wolfe, *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2000), we would not be wrong in considering Christian education as the CRC's great gift to North American evangelical Christianity. We who are the legatees of that rich heritage have a divine calling to be its responsible stewards.

Third, it appears to be the case that the Christian school has a positive effect on new church development (NCD). In a thorough study of CRC new church plants between 1970 and 1990, CRC home missionary David Snapper concluded, "the research disclosed high correlation between the success for the NCD and the proximity of a CSI-affiliate school. Snapper notes, "while we cannot conclude that a CSI-affiliate school will cause church growth, its symbiotic presence in the environment may be a measure of a community's 'readiness' to plant a new congregation." He concludes: "Such schools seem to either signal a fertile NCD environment or to contribute indirectly to NCD success" ("Unfulfilled Expectations of Church Growth," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 [1996]: 484). This ought not to surprise us because Christian educa-

tion is integrally bound to Reformed confessional and theological identity as well as to a Reformed worldview.

In conclusion, while we judge it to be a mistake to set evangelism and/or missions *over against* Christian education, we do endorse adding Matthew 28:19-20 and the Great Commission to covenant and kingdom as doctrinal-theological pillars for Christian day school education. We also need to point out here that Christian schools are no *substitute* for active evangelism and community outreach by the church. Rather, a Christian school ought to be seen as an essential component in the church's responsibility to disciple the nations.

With all these additional theological and practical matters, is there a different way of conceptualizing the grounds for and content of Christian education? Can we incorporate covenant, kingdom, and mission as well as other elements into a unified theologically defined concept? We suggest the notion of narrative as a possibility for such an integration. Narrative has been proposed as one way of conceiving the framework for the curricular content of Christian education (see CSI publication, *The Christian Story and the Christian School*) and is a biblically based frame for integrating the covenantal obligations of parents and the Christian community, the worldview dimension of the kingdom of God, and the lordship of Jesus Christ as well as the missionary call of the Great Commission. We shall first consider this latter, broad role of narrative.

Narrative or story is an alternative way of speaking about covenant. As CSI's new Bible curriculum summarizes it, the Bible is "The Story of God and His People." John Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with this covenantal assertion: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves." Analogously, we can say that the whole narrative of Scripture, or the history of salvation, has two essential participants—God and his people. The plot of this story is the plot of providential history: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation. This C-F-R-C narrative structure as the basis of the CRC's *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, of course, also has profound worldview implications (see Cornelius Plantinga's recent rationale for a Reformed Christian college education, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living*, and Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained*), but, before it is an *idea*, it is a *reality* that gives Christians their identity.

What does it mean to be a Christian? A Christian is a member of the covenantal people of God; all of us together are pilgrims on the way to the New Jerusalem (Heb. 11). God's covenant people today participate in the plot of the divinely governed narrative that began with creation and identifies us today as those who live in the in-between-times—after the first and prior to the second coming of Christ. This narrative sense of identity, it hardly needs saying, as a countercultural force is a crucial ingredient in the struggle of the kingdom of God with the idols of the day. What a narratively shaped Christian education should do is encourage God's covenantal people who live in two different narratives—that of the city of God and that of the earthly city—to a life of discipleship in which the values of the city of God dominate. Good Christian education presents an alternative narrative to the narratives of popular culture and the mass media discussed in section VI, A, 1 of this report.

In terms of curricular content for Christian schools, thinking narratively helps Christian educators rise above some of the tensions and difficulties that have arisen in the Christian school movement. The covenantal emphasis is

susceptible (though it is not intrinsically so determined) to a separationist model of Christian education. Christian education is then regarded as for *our* children, our children who need to be protected from the world. When combined with pietism (to be distinguished from appropriate piety), the school takes on a fundamentalist tone, defensive and anti-intellectual, and is withdrawn from many of the big issues of the broader community. Here the school takes on a role as a primarily evangelistic institution, an integral part of the church's broad calling to save our children. Here, somewhat ironically, the misuse of the covenant conviction blends with the evangelistic concern mentioned earlier in this section of the report.

On the other extreme, an overemphasis on the lordship of Christ or on the kingdom of God can also lead to excess. Some versions of kingdom theology are triumphalistic, finding in the efforts of churches and Christians a postmillennial hope that *we* will bring about the kingdom of God through our rigorous moral efforts. In its worldview form, an emphasis on the *vision* or *perspective* of the kingdom can lead to a kind of intellectualism in which Christian ideas and the development of a Christian mind is the one and only goal of Christian education. Our committee is not eager to join in the chorus of anti-intellectualism all too prevalent in our time and in our communities, but it is important to insist that developing a Christian perspective on every school subject while a necessary component of a good Christian education is not a sufficient criterion. The risk here is that Christian academic excellence fosters an elitism that becomes indifferent to other elements of Christian discipleship and citizenship. We can be grateful for the reputation for academic excellence enjoyed by most CSI schools. However, as we face the idols of our day (see section VI, A) there is a real danger that we begin to define the *raison d'être* of Christian schools in terms of such academic excellence. This danger is heightened by the deplorable state of far too much public school education in North America. In such a climate, it becomes easy to celebrate the Christian school for its *achievement*, especially achievement that is recognized by the world, whether it be in academics or athletics. When such worldly affirmations of success become too important for us, Christian education loses its soul.

Here, too, a narrative framing of success provides a quite different vision for Christian schools. Of course God asks that we use our minds and bodies in such a way that we magnify him through the gifts he has given to us. Lack of discipline, laziness, and indifference must be confronted spiritually. In the final analysis, however, success within the frame of the Christian story is quite different from that of the world. Christians, also in their assessment of schools, should measure success in terms of good done in and for the kingdom of Christ. The values of the kingdom are the inverse of those exalted in the world. In those terms, Mother Teresa was a greater success than, say, billionaire Howard Hughes.

This is a fundamental message that must be clearly taught and learned in the Christian school. The goal of Christian education is to prepare our children and young people to participate in and contribute to the plot of God's providential narrative. It would be a loss for the kingdom of God if our Christian schools produced many business executives, doctors, bankers, and lawyers but no inner-city pastors, missionaries, or advocates for the poor and hungry. This is indeed something that a school's teachers and students must *know*; it is also something they must learn to *do*. The Christian life of faith, as the apostle James

reminds us, is not only a matter of believing but also a matter of working. All this must be shaped by the grand covenantal narrative of God and his people, a people called to be kingdom citizens under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

FAQ 5.1: I'm a little confused here. If Christ is Lord of all "every square inch" and all that, how does that square with Christians' running into their own private ghettos of education and hiding from the world that Christ rules? Isn't Christ Lord of the public school? And because that is so, should we as Christians be there transforming the public schools into what Christ wants them to be?

A. A very good question. This is one of the areas of greatest confusion in our Reformed world in recent years. The thinking goes exactly as you formulate it. If Christ is Lord of all, should we be everywhere in society and culture transforming it in a Christian manner, bringing it into the kingdom of God? There are major leaps in this argument and thus major problems. To say that Christ is Lord—obviously true, a keystone of the New Testament (Matt. 28:18-20, Phil. 2, Rom. 12:1-2, Col. 1 and 3)—has led some to confuse the kingdom of Christ in the sense of those who openly acknowledge him with the kingdom of this world. You see, though Christ is King not all acknowledge him as King, and we make a huge mistake when we fail to take this into account. To put it in New Testament terms, this is a failure to keep clear the distinction between the church and the world. The New Testament uses *world* in at least two quite different senses. In John 3:16, for instance, it is the world as created by God, especially human creatures, that are said to be loved by God. He created them, he sent his son to die for lost human beings. The same Gospel of John (17:9-18) also records our Lord's praying to the Father that his disciples (and we!) might be kept *from* the world. In fact, he indicates that he is *not praying for the world* here, in the sense of world as that which is opposed to the kingdom of God. Sometimes in our zeal to reach out we forget who we are. To use another wonderful distinction from our old friend Abraham (Kuyper, that is), we become so engrossed with *common grace* that we forget the *antithesis* (between the church and the world).

VI. Christian education in today's world

A. Why a new report?

The *original* mandate given to our committee includes as a ground the fact that the CRC has not produced a synodical statement on Christian education since 1955, observing that much has changed since then. One of the first tasks of our committee was to attempt a summary of the cultural, social, ecclesiastical, and educational changes of the last fifty years. Thus, in this section of our report, we first consider changes in the *world context* within which Christian education must operate; second, we consider some changes in the Christian Reformed Church in the last half century; third, we examine some conflicts about Christian education; and finally, we conclude by summarizing the variety of choices and challenges facing CRC members as a result of these changes.

1. Changes in the world: Secularism and consumerism

To observe that North American culture and society have undergone major changes since 1955 is to state the obvious. Our concern here is less with these changes in themselves than with their impact on Christian schools and the Christian Reformed Church, neither of which exist in a cultural or social vacuum. Reformed Christians do not consider cultural involvement as an evil to be avoided but accept the calling to discern what is good and what is evil in culture. In addition, Reformed Christians believe that Christians have callings to serve Christ the Lord in the arena of culture also. Such a conviction of cultural vocation implies that the Christian role is not to be a passive consumer of the world's culture but an active transforming influence for good in the societies where our Lord has placed us. The world's charms are seductive, however, and we must honestly face the possibility that our churches and schools may have been subtly influenced and transformed by the idols of our culture into their deforming images. To the extent that contemporary idols such as materialism, consumerism, and hedonism gain footholds in our faith communities, we may see declining commitment to and support for Reformed Christian day schools.

In 1955, the nurturing of CRC children was done basically by our churches, homes, and Christian schools—a pattern often referred to as a “three-legged stool.” However, there was always another “leg”—the mass media and popular culture. Although less noticeable in 1955, some fifty years later the mass media has become a dominant influence in our society. As a result, according to Neil Postman, our children are now educated by two dominant curricula: the “first curriculum of the *school* and the alternative curriculum of the mass media, particularly television” (*Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, chs. 3, 4). For Christian parents, this is a matter of great concern because the mass media leg unbalances the home, the school, and the church legs by its overwhelming presence and its promotion of a quite different set of values. The problem is exacerbated by modern computer technology. While the Internet is a blessing as a source of information, it also makes available a Pandora's box of material that, when opened, is subversive and hostile to the Christian faith and its moral commitments.

Increasingly, even non-Christian observers of the mass media note that it is not neutral but has its own biases and even religious commitments. In many ways, the popular culture spread by North American mass media promotes ideas and values hostile to commitments of Christian morality. In a word, our society is being pressured to become more and more secular by persistent attempts to remove religion from the public square and relegate it to the private sphere. We and our children are offered the tantalizing idols of secularism such as individualism, consumerism, hedonism, rationalism, and relativism. Christianity in particular is treated with hostility because it is judged to be exclusive, divisive, and thus hateful. The religious ideology of secularism directly clashes with the Reformed conviction that Christ is Lord of all. Because that conviction is one of the essential grounds for the practice of Christian day schools, secularism presents a major threat to Christian education at all levels.

This intensified drive for secularization represents a significant social and cultural shift since 1955, and this change can clearly be seen in the public schools of Canada and the United States. Public education has

become aggressively and increasingly secular in the last forty years. This is not a particularly new insight or radical claim. When *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* made explicit in quasi-confessional terms what had been a long-standing tradition of denominational commitment to Christian schooling, the study version of *Our World Belongs to God* in its commentary on paragraph 50 also underscored the urgency of Christian education in *our time*:

Nowhere is the growing secular spirit of our society more evident than in our educational institutions. For at all levels of learning secular humanism has become the dominant philosophy in public education. . . . In this time of educational ferment we must be firm in our commitment to Christian education as we within the Reformed tradition have come to understand it. In school life we must discern the religious roots of the prevailing secular spirit. . . . The basic problem is the wholesale replacement of a Judeo-Christian worldview by the religious worldview of secular humanism. As churches we repent of our failure to protest this robbery of our heritage in such a strategic area. We pledge our active intercession for reformation in school and society. We dedicate ourselves to promoting Christian education which follows the biblical principles seen within the Reformed tradition (pp. 80, 81).

This assessment about the secularization of public education is, if anything, even more true today than ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. A series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions concerning the First Amendment, as well as changing mores and laws in Canada, have had the effect of making the public school free of religion—at least free of the Christian religion.

The point we are making here should not be misunderstood. We are not suggesting that public schools and teachers are the *cause* of secularism or that in some deliberate way all public teachers are apostles and prophets of secularism. On the contrary, the pressure of secularism is a pervasive spiritual force that affects all of us—individual Christians, our churches, and also our Christian day schools. The latter are never isolated and insulated greenhouses where tender plants are protected from the culture's idols. What must be said, however, is that public education in North America is *institutionally* committed *by law* to secularism. In parallel with the claims made about institutional racism, one need not be an *intentional* or particularly active secularist to contribute to the secularizing direction of education. Furthermore, the pressure to denude our public life of Christian presence and testimony is not new to our day; it is a feature of modernity itself. Already in 1846 the great Princeton Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge told his church's general assembly that secular education was "becoming the popular theory in this country":

It is already difficult, in many places, to retain even the reading of the Scriptures in the public schools. The whole system is in the hands of men of the world, in many of our states, and is avowedly secular. Now with regard to this scheme it may be remarked that it is a novel and fearful experiment. The idea of giving an education to the children of a country from which religion is to be excluded, we believe to be peculiar to the nineteenth century. Again, it is obvious that education without religion is irreligious. It cannot be neutral, and in fact, is not neutral.

(*Princeton Review* [1846]: 439)

What Hodge found to be peculiar for his own time is now commonplace among us. We take it for granted that public school education should be

neutral. Hodge, however, thought it to be a dangerous and destructive notion, one that, in his judgment was “fortunately, too absurd, too monstrous, too unthankful to take a deep and lasting root in American soil” (*Systematic Theology*, 515).

Unless children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they, and the society which they constitute or control will go to destruction. Consequently, when a state resolves that religious instruction shall be banished from the schools and other literary institutions, it virtually resolves on self-destruction.

(*Systematic Theology*, 3:353)

What Hodge and many others of his day did not envision was a time when what they looked at with horror would be commonplace in America.

Similar convictions and sentiments can also be tracked among the nineteenth-century advocates of Christian public school education in Canada such as John Strachan and Egerton Ryerson in the Province of Ontario. Ryerson, the first superintendent of education in Ontario and a contemporary of Charles Hodge, believed that while public education should not be sectarian, “it should, nevertheless, be unmistakably Christian in content, for no one doubted the Christian basis of Upper Canadian Society. Equally significant was Ryerson’s conviction that morality, the inculcation of which he regarded as a special obligation of the schools, could only be grounded in Christianity” (John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires*, p. 145). What made the Canadian situation different from the American was the special provision made for Roman Catholics to establish their own public schools. The objection of Roman Catholics had to do in large part with the use of the Protestant Bible in the classroom. The response of Protestant spokesmen is significant for what it tells us about the religious convictions of the Ontario Protestant common public school:

If the use, by Protestants, of the Holy Scriptures in their [public!] schools is so objectionable to our fellow-subjects of that other faith [Roman Catholic], the children of both religious persuasions must be educated apart; for Protestants can never yield to that point, and if it is insisted that the Scriptures should not be a text book in schools, we must part in peace, and conduct our education of the respective Bodies according to our sense of what is right.

(*A Profusion of Spires*, p. 146)

So, it is fair to conclude that public education at all levels is not religiously neutral. It is also obvious that the course of secularization in public education in both Canada and the United States has run its full course so that the presuppositions of the nineteenth-century common school have been turned upside down. Here, too, some historical distance is helpful. As we make the positive case for Christian day school education, it seems to some who advocate a continuing and even strengthening Christian presence in public schools that our support of Christian schools is too often unfairly at the expense of public schools. Christian school supporters, so it is sometimes said, exaggerate the problems of public schools and are unwilling to own up to problems in Christian schools. This issue must be faced. Our committee wishes to underscore our conviction that the relationship between public education and Christian day schools must not be seen, by Christians at least, as a straightforward win-lose situation in which it is necessary to trash public schools in order to build up Christian schools.

Support for Christian education that would joyfully try to ride on the back of the misery of public education is unworthy of disciples of Jesus Christ. As, citizens we must seek the best education for *all* the children of our community.

The concerns about and even objection to public school education arising from Reformed conviction do not depend on public education's inferiority as such nor does it waver in the face of quality public education. The objection is a religious, philosophical, and spiritual one. As long ago as 1929 and 1930, then editor of *The Banner* the Rev. H.J. Kuiper,¹ in an extended series of articles about Christian education, complained about the sorry moral and spiritual state of public schools but insisted that the problem was *structural*: Public education opposes specifically Christian instruction and thus jeopardizes the spiritual formation of Christian children (*The Banner*, 3/21/1930, pp. 269-70). In addition, Kuiper directly took on the familiar argument that believers could be a positive, even Christian presence in public schools through Bible reading, prayer, and other witness. Acknowledging that the public schools in some smaller communities had a quasi-Christian character, Kuiper forcefully denounced this as *illegally* taking advantage of a situation and turned the tables by pleading for opening Christian schools to others, calling them the church's greatest *evangelistic* asset (*The Banner*, 9/6/1929).

When Kuiper indicated that he thought active Christianizing of the public schools by believers was *illegal* and should not be encouraged, his journalistic sparring partner in *The Banner*, the Rev. John Vander Mey, after agreeing that Christian schools were a good thing and should be established, pleaded for moderation of zeal in pressing the issue. Calvinists, he insisted are not separatists and, unlike the situation in the nineteenth-century Netherlands where a virulent anti-Christian secularism reigned, there is openness in American public education for Christian moral teaching and leadership. Particularly in communities where there is no Christian school, parents should be encouraged to foster Christian leadership and instruction where it is tolerated in spite of the law. He lamented Kuiper's extreme and sectarian spirit and pleaded for a moderate and mediating position—a yes to Christian schools but also a mildly qualified yes to public schools (*The Banner*, 11/18/1929, pp. 756-57; 11/25/1929, pp. 780-81). The polemical Kuiper, holding the editorial reins in firm hands, immediately denied the charge of being a separatist and a fanatic *with indignation* (*The Banner*, 12/13/1929, pp. 932-33). Kuiper later concluded the discussion by expressing his concern that a failure to assess the public school system in a spiritually and religiously accurate manner resulting in a moderate, mediating position—Christian schools are a good thing but we must also actively support public education—would inevitably undermine the cause of Christian day schools by understating the urgency of the matter. Public education, he was convinced, jeopardizes our children's spiritual formation. Kuiper believed that his debate with Vander Mey had in fact already had a negative effect on Christian education. In many Christian Reformed communities, he contended, “the opposition to the Christian school movement has appreciably stiffened” (*The Banner*, 3/21/1930, pp. 268-69).

Our brief recounting of this lengthy and pivotal discussion in the history of CRC support for Christian education, now some seventy-five years ago, is

instructive for our current discussions in the church as well. As Synod 2003 made abundantly clear, the CRC is of a mind to continue more than a century-long tradition of enthusiastic support for Reformed Christian day school education. Yet, the questions posed by Rev. Vander Mey in the 1920s and 1930s have not gone away; they have intensified. Our committee believes that there are two lessons to be learned from the exchange we have briefly summarized. Where there is indeed an openness within public schools for Christian teachers and /or parents to bear positive witness to their faith, such openness should be lauded with thanksgiving. At the same time, we share Kuiper's concern that the spiritual situation of public education be considered honestly and openly and in such a way that it does not undermine or have a negative effect on support for Christian education.

While the Rev. Vander Mey's observation may have been true in the 1930s that, unlike the situation in the nineteenth-century Netherlands where a virulent anti-Christian secularism reigned, there is openness in American public education for Christian moral teaching and leadership, this is most certainly not the case today. We reiterate a point made earlier that in its support for Christian day schools, the CRC must acknowledge the Christian liberty of parents, recognize that not all its members are of the same mind, and make allowance for all sorts of special circumstances. What we emphasize is that especially today parents must be discerning and spiritually vigilant when making and helping their children make important educational choices that shape life. As a *general* rule, it seems to us that thanks to its legal, institutional commitment to secularism, the North American public school is a far more dangerous place spiritually in 2005-2006 than it was in 1955, to say nothing of 1855.

FAQ 6.1: But our local public school doesn't seem to fit the pattern of aggressive secularism at all. The majority of teachers and even students are members of local evangelical churches and the environment is decent and the education good quality. Why generalize like this?

A. Thank God for his common grace and the existence of such schools, but consider the long-term religious consequences. By law and design public schools *may not* and *cannot* provide a Christian interpretation of God's world to children nor should we expect them to do so. They are required to interpret the world apart from and without referencing God at all. There is no getting around that point. By definition, public schools are *institutionally* incapable of fulfilling the calling parents have to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord and in light of the wisdom of his revelation. That is a major reason why Christian parents home school or send their children to schools that do, by intention and design, educate from a Christian worldview.

In this world where the secularizing pressures to limit our faith commitments and expression to a private sphere are overwhelming, Reformed Christianity in particular is threatened at its core. The Reformed faith is cosmic in its scope and public in its expression; Christ is Lord of every domain of our society and culture, and retreating from this broad vision into a private faith is to exchange Reformed Christianity for something

much less. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to maintain the commitment to and enthusiasm for distinctively Reformed Christian day school education. At the same time, when the church faces such pressures, it needs Reformed Christian education all the more. It is hard to imagine the CRC's developing future leaders who are committed to the Reformed faith in its cosmic vision without Reformed Christian education from kindergarten to college. The complexity and challenges of our modern (some refer to it as postmodern) world demand well-rounded and well-trained Reformed Christians who can be a transforming influence in the world. From a human standpoint, the very future of the CRC *as a Reformed church*, preparing a new generation of Christian disciples committed to a cosmic vision of Christ's lordship, may depend on how successful we are at maintaining flourishing Reformed Christian schools at all levels. Both the church and the school face enormous cultural pressures and challenges against Reformed identity; for either to withstand, they will need the full support and cooperation of the other.

Anxiety about potential future calamities in the kingdom of Christ is not a good or sufficient reason to embrace the cause of Christian education. The desire for and support of Christian education is born out of faith and is an expression of positive, confident, joyful obedience. If we believe that Christ is indeed Lord of all, we must not exempt the CRC from his reign. To put it even more starkly, the future of Christ's kingdom does not depend on the survival of the CRC. Nonetheless, it is in the CRC that the Lord has placed us and has entrusted to our stewardship a vision of Christian discipleship that has been a blessing and can continue to be a blessing to North American society. It is thus in the spirit of our committee's synodical mandate that we call the CRC to reaffirm and renew that Reformed vision—a vision that sees Christ as Lord of all, including our educational institutions.

It is also worth noting that a commitment to Christian schools and Christian education actually has a quasi-confessional status in the Christian Reformed Church. Recall that *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* states this explicitly in paragraph 50: "In education we seek to acknowledge the Lord by promoting schools and teaching in which the light of his Word shines in all learning, where students, of whatever ability, are treated as persons who bear God's image and have a place in his plan." This contemporary testimony thus commits us as a denomination to an inclusive view of Christian day school education where no child of the covenant community is left out for any reason, and the education of all the church's children is a responsibility of the whole community.

We suggested above that the CRC has a vested interest in Reformed Christian day schools if it is to retain its own Reformed identity. Conversely, if Reformed Christian education is to flourish, the church must repay the favor and support Reformed day schools. This, too, has been a long-standing conviction in the Christian Reformed Church. H.J. Kuiper, in his series of articles in *The Banner* on Christian education in 1929 and 1930 regularly posited the thesis that where Christian schools flourish, Christian Reformed congregations will also (see, e.g., *The Banner*, 8/16/29, pp. 564-65). It is here that the spirit of secularism threatens both church and school at a different level. If the vision of Christ's lordship over society, culture,

and education diminishes in either church or school, the other's Reformed identity is also threatened. Church and school are in a symbiotic relationship, and their successes and fortunes are closely linked. When the vision for the Reformed worldview fades in our communities, we, too, are vulnerable to the seductions of secularism and are tempted to privatize our faith.

A loss of Reformed self-consciousness in our communities will likely also result in diminished allegiance to Christian day schools. For one thing, they are no longer in competition only with public education. Political trends increasingly favor parental choice in education and offer hope for greater justice in educational funding. Our committee lauds all efforts to increase choice and enhance educational opportunity. These efforts are fully in the spirit of Church Order Article 71 as well as previous CRC synodical pronouncements that place the primary responsibility for educating children on parents.

However, a caution must also be sounded because increased choice requires an informed consumer. The term *consumer* illustrates the problem perfectly. In a culture and society driven by materialist and consumerist ideals, it is also possible that we begin to treat church and school as simply one more consumer product and make choices not on sound biblical, theologically informed preferences but on less important ones. The greater availability of choice demands enhanced discernment on the part of Christian parents who need to be able to make discriminating decisions when faced with all the various options available. To provide just a few examples: How does one distinguish between a school that only puts a layer of Christian-values icing on a secular-curricular cake and one that truly integrates the Christian narrative into the entire curriculum? How does one tell apart schools that actually succeed in such integration from those that only add piety in the form of worship exercises to an otherwise indifferent or even secular curriculum? How does one determine if a school absolutizes academic excellence, athletics, or social activism at the expense of a balanced, integrated Christian curriculum for all children? Finally, what are the differences between Christian schools' and charter schools' emphasizing traditional family values? Similar sorts of questions must be asked about homeschooling curricula and organizations. Christian Reformed parents face so many more choices in education today than they did in 1955. Therefore, it may be even more important for CRC parents today to have an informed framework for understanding Reformed Christian education (see section V) than it *may have been* in the more homogenous CRC communities of 1955 and earlier.

In our consumer society, the availability of choices in education brings with it the potential for bane as well as the opportunity of blessing. Parents run the risk of thinking about the education of their children as just one more consumer product to be purchased for helping their children get ahead. Christian education is only a financial investment from which parents then want a good return. Entrance into Ivy League schools, a well-paying job, or a better athletic program might all become more important than preparation for service in God's kingdom. Christian discipleship then becomes hostage to unworthy consumerist goals. Parents are not the only ones tempted by consumerist ideas; schools may succumb as well. A Christian school may be tempted to compare itself to non-Christian schools

with respect to standards in athletics, arts, merit scholarships, and so forth on purely worldly terms rather than seeing its mission as preparing students for kingdom service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Facing a myriad of choices in education, parents will naturally be led to shop for the best school for their children. Christian schools must bear in mind that parents seek quality education for their children out of love and that parental concerns are not necessarily driven by un-Christian consumerism. Consequently, parental concerns and complaints about alleged failings of Christian schools deserve to be listened to and treated with respect and care. Here great discernment is needed. Are parental concerns directed to the Reformed Christian character of the school? To students becoming better disciples of Jesus Christ, equipped for service in his kingdom? It could very well be that the Christian school in question has succumbed to worldly consumerist pressure and is more concerned about the success of its football team than its identity as a Reformed Christian school. On the other hand, a parental concern could also be the opposite: concern that with all the tuition being expended on Christian education, their child does not have as good an opportunity to get a football scholarship as the neighbor child who attends the public school because the school's values are elsewhere. In the former, the school is guilty of consumerism, in the latter it is the parents. Both are conceivable; both undoubtedly happen in our communities. We need to keep this spiritual context and contest of our age constantly before us as we consider the place of Reformed Christian day school education today, at the beginning of the third millennium.

FAQ 7.1: We took our child out of our local Reformed Christian school because the administration and school board seem indifferent to our concerns. We will be sending our child to another Christian school this fall. Are we the sort of consumers that you complain of in your report? Do you judge our actions as a bad thing?

A. Not necessarily. We sense how hard this is for you. You are trying to do the best for your child and are in a situation of conflict that does occasionally happen in Christian communities; it is a tough spot for parents to be in. Because you do not specify what exactly it is that you are dissatisfied with, it is hard to answer your question in general. From your question, it appears that you have done the right thing in making your concerns known to the school board. We don't know how else to advise you and other parents in similar situations but to suggest that you ask the administration and board of your school to join you in an extended study and discussion of what it means to be a Reformed Christian day school. Perhaps, you might begin by together carefully reading and reflecting on this study committee report. We hope that such prayerful dialogue would be a basis for discussing in an open and Christian manner the differences you may have with each other's views (see Recommendation F).

FAQ 7.2: Thanks for being so understanding. Our minister and church council really don't want to get involved because they say that the

church must not interfere with the school's freedom. Is this what you meant by sphere sovereignty?

A. Only up to a point. (See FAQ 3.1-3.4.) The church *as institution* (the official church) has no say in the direct governance of an independent, parent-controlled school. However, the church and its officebearers, particularly ministers of the Word, do have a responsibility to be a prophetic voice in all spheres of life, and the school is certainly one of the most immediate and important areas of concern for the church. It is perfectly appropriate for the official church to ask its members to be vigilant for the well-being of the schools they support, to do what is humanly possible and necessary to maintain the Reformed identity and Christian character of such schools. (See Recommendations G-I.)

We should, of course, not live in fear of possible storm clouds on future horizons and be paralyzed in our acts of faithful obedience to our Lord. At the same time, it would also be a breach of trust for us to become indifferent to potential drift away from the ideals of Reformed Christian education. The threat of drift is real, and it should be as much a matter of concern to the church as it is to the school. The long and clear history of educational institutions that have fallen from the Christian ideals of their founding, with many even repudiating the Christian faith altogether, shows the close connection between the health of the school and the involvement of the church. This is especially true for church-affiliated colleges such as the relationship between Calvin College and the CRC.

The story of the secularization of American universities is well chronicled (G. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*; James Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light*). As important as the stories of decline is the account given by Robert Benne's recent book, *Quality with Soul*, which is an account of the schools that have *resisted* to some degree or other the siren calls of secularization. Benne's story demonstrates that resistance to the spirit of the age, especially to the process of secularization in the school and privatization of faith in public life, requires the close cooperation of church and school.

As Benne examines the common factors that help a school maintain its Christian vision and practice and not succumb to secularization, the main one is keeping close links with the sponsoring church and upholding its distinctive confessional identity. Thus, when a Lutheran school loses its *Lutheran* identity it will most likely eventually lose its Christian identity as well. For a school to remain *Christian* and not secularize, it is important that it keep its Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Anabaptist, or Reformed identity. Putting it negatively, Benne describes the process of secularization thus: "first, making education 'non-sectarian' by identifying with a general, generic Christianity; then by an appeal to spiritual and moral ideals of a vaguely religious or patriotic cast; and finally by the exclusion of specifically Christian religious values and practices in the name of allegedly universal intellectual, moral and democratic qualities" (p. 4). Benne warns: "One decisive mark of secularized schools is the lack of mutual recognition and care by both school and church, when neither sees the other as crucial to their mission" (p. 182). The lesson from history is thus clear: If we want to keep our Reformed Christian schools authentically Christian, it is impor-

tant that they stay Reformed. The Reformed Christian school needs a healthy Reformed Church for the sake of its own health—and vice versa.

It is important to make clear at this point that the close faith relationship between a Reformed Christian school and a Reformed church does not mean a church-operated school. School and church retain their own distinct identity and governance autonomy. Nonetheless, a mutual regard for each other's religious identity is not only appropriate but necessary. In particular, both church and school bear mutual accountability for maintaining the confessional integrity of each. Here, too, it is worth noting the common pattern of drift that Benne catalogs in the process of school secularization. It begins by eliminating the tradition's distinct worship practices (chapel is generic, then optional, then cut out altogether) and codes of conduct. In an attempt to make the school less sectarian and distinct, efforts are intensified to recruit students and teachers who do not identify with the tradition. The result is likely to be a decline in support from the sponsoring denomination. Because decline in students and funds must be made up somehow, the school works even harder at recruiting outsiders to the tradition, which then erodes support even further.

The portrait Benne paints describes the process by which a school loses its distinctive religious identity, then loses its Christian identity, and then becomes secular. We cannot avoid facing the reality of drift away from the core vision of our tradition or be sanguine about the possibility that our Reformed Christian schools at all levels are also threatened by the forces of secularism. Because the confession that Jesus is Lord over all of life is a key conviction of the Reformed tradition, both the Reformed school and the Christian Reformed Church will need to be proactive in affirming and passing on to future generations the value of such a Reformed vision and identity.

Finally, we cannot adequately describe our cultural context without using the word *postmodern*. Although postmodernism, by its very nature, is infuriatingly difficult to pin down, its dominant notion is the refusal to acknowledge any objective truth. No single narrative, and for sure not the biblical one, has more validity than any other one. In fact, according to postmodernism, there are no large narratives that provide meaning across different cultures; it is all a matter of one's perspective, of finding the truth of one's own story. Instead of Enlightenment confidence about our knowledge and optimism about the human future, post-Enlightenment thought is characterized by a hopeless, centerless pessimism. Truth is judged to be unattainable, values are all relative, and we are consigned to choosing all things for ourselves. This attitude is pervasive and powerful in contemporary North American society. It is also, so Christian conviction and experience teach us, a dangerous attitude—one that potentially threatens our very freedom and openness as a people. Christian resistance to this postmodern danger would seem to be an obligation to our Lord and to our fellow American and Canadian citizens.

However, our communities themselves are not unaffected by this new relativism. When a culture through its mass media emphasizes maximizing personal feelings, then decision-making based on personal commitment or religious duty is minimized, as Charles Colson has noted, in favor of a therapeutic mindset in which being happy rather than holy is *the* ultimate

religious goal. It is not surprising then that many relationships based on love, trust, devotion, and commitment break down. The rate of divorce in Christian communities is practically the same as that of the society around us. Not only does this affect the way in which we conduct Christian education but so much of the school's and the church's energy then goes into healing the broken situations arising from the self-centered, hedonist, consumerist values of our world. We risk becoming so self-absorbed by our own hurts that we fail to see the larger spiritual conflicts of our day. The relevance of a Reformed Christian education with kingdom vision may not be apparent to some and may seem to others as irrelevant and the financial sacrifice as poor stewardship. Furthermore, the pressure of relativism pushes our young people toward moral and religious pluralism. The ideal of tolerance is powerful.

In conclusion, much has changed since 1955 in the cultural water in which we swim as Reformed Christians in North America. Increased secularization worships the creature rather than the creator, and idols replace the Lord in the hearts, minds, and imaginations of our youth. Postmodernism nips at the heels of these idols only to replace them with other godless ones. The mass media leg of the nurturing stool has taken on cancerous characteristics as it infects and infests our churches, homes, and schools. In this context, it seems to us that Reformed Christian education is as critical as ever. Reformed Christian day schools can play a significant cultural role in our society by using the light of God's Word to shine in all areas of learning so that students of various abilities are treated respectfully as God's image bearers who have their place in God's plans as the narrative of God and his people continues until the Consummation. This requires diligence on the part of parents, churches, and other supporters of Christian day schools. Know that our communities—our families, our churches, our schools—are confronted by powerful idols in our day, notably those of secularism and consumerism, and that we may never be satisfied with mere institutional loyalty. We and our institutions must be led by the Holy Spirit and ruled by God's Word. That is the challenge given to all of us.

2. Changes in the Christian Reformed Church: Diversity and identity

Not only have our culture and society changed since 1955, and undoubtedly the CRC along with them, but our church has also changed from within. This change can be summed up in one word—diversity. In 1955, a visitor from Vancouver, British Columbia, who attended worship in Midland Park, New Jersey, would immediately feel at home with the order and style of worship. There was a standard and recognizable liturgy, and every congregation sang from the red *Psalter Hymnal*. 'Tis so no longer. Liturgies can vary greatly from congregation to congregation and song lyrics on overhead projectors often replace the *Psalter Hymnal*. In addition, most CRC congregations, with some exceptions (notably in what is now Classis Red Mesa) were monochromatically white and primarily ethnically Dutch. Here, too, things are no longer what they used to be, and our committee here reiterates the observation and endorses the conclusion of the 1996 Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God report that the growing ethnic and racial diversity of Canada and the United

States presents “a truly exciting challenge for the CRCNA, which in God’s sovereign grace is already becoming a diverse, multiracial, and multiethnic family of God” (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 218). In the remainder of this section in our report, we will first address the area of worship, particularly preaching, and second, the challenges of our increased diversity.

It is not the task of our committee to determine or assess the extent to which the preaching from our CRC pulpits has changed over the last forty years, but we can make a case for the sort of preaching that nurtures the commitment of CRC members to Christian education. In keeping with the Reformed kingdom vision described in the previous section of this report, we endorse preaching that proclaims the relevance of the good news to all areas of life—preaching that courageously exposes the secular idols of our age, especially the idols of the opposing kingdom. Such preaching is critical and requires a strong narrative sense of the Bible’s history of redemption, insight into the story of our secular culture, and the prophetic ability to relate the one to the other. Specific sermons about Christian education may be less important than the type of preaching we have been describing—preaching that centers on the lordship of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. This is the sort of preaching that equips CRC congregations with the biblical wisdom and discernment required to deal with the many complex issues involved in Christian education in our contemporary secular world.

This kind of preaching is hard to maintain in the cultural context described in the previous section. When faith is privatized and individualized, then congregations may desire messages that massage their feelings instead of messages that confront the idols with which they are becoming increasingly comfortable. That a growing sector of North American evangelical preaching leans toward such therapeutic goals rather than truth or holiness has been compellingly demonstrated by David Wells in his books *No Place for Truth* and *God in the Wasteland*. It would be a mistake to assume that these same influences have not affected CRC pulpits as well. What we do have is anecdotal evidence encountered by our committee members, particularly from the testimony of Christian school teachers, that the Christian Reformed pulpit is too often silent or muted in its support for Christian education. If so, then it is even more urgent that CRC preaching be powerfully directed at proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ and at releasing us from our captivity to the age’s fashions and idols.

Of the present age’s idols, perhaps none appeals to the old Adam in us as does North American individualism. Individualism comes to expression in church life as localism or congregationalism. The allegiance and support of individual members and local churches turns away from denominational ministries to local ones. Especially where denominational offices are at some distance from them, local congregations feel less and less involved in the denomination’s churchwide ministries. This trend is noticeable in the CRC with decreasing support for ministry shares during a decade of remarkable and increasing prosperity. The independent spirit of congregationalism may also have made a significant contribution to the loss of CRC membership over the last decade. Along with controversial agenda items such as women in ecclesiastical office, which has created unhappiness, a general sense of alienation from denominational ministries contributes to a

climate in which breaking old bonds of ecclesiastical fellowship and forging new ones seems to be relatively painless.

The concerns expressed about consumerism in the previous section need to be repeated here. Pure consumers are by definition individualists; they purchase for the moment, for the immediate gratification and not for the greater good or the long run. The primary concern facing our communities when it comes to consumerism is the matter of stewardship—stewardship of our confessional heritage as well as our finances. Our denomination as a whole as well as individual congregations needs to be concerned about the possibility that Christian education will become elitist and will be the exclusive province of the wealthy. According to paragraph 50 of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, Christian schools exist “to prepare all students of whatever ability” for kingdom service. We must continue to insist that Reformed Christian education is not only for the most academically gifted or for the privileged. We must continue to insist that a return on education of success and monetary reward is not the first priority. We should not be sanguine about the seductive lure of such consumerism. While increasing costs of education may cause financial hardship for some, the general affluence of most CRC communities today does raise the question of whether Christian education is simply one more consumer choice in competition with a new car, a motor home, expensive vacations, or a summer cottage. Under these circumstances and values, it will be difficult if not impossible to maintain the vision for and commitment to a community of belief and its countercultural witness as a signpost of Christ’s kingdom. The lure of consumerism and the call to obedient stewardship is a message the whole church needs to hear. We need to ask ourselves whether a move toward congregationalism and indifference to denominational identity and ministry represents the same consumerist and individualist spirit that tempts individual believers and families. If so, then there is here yet one more link between denominational Reformed identity and willingness to sacrifice for Christian day school education.

Legitimate concerns about individualism, congregationalism, and consumerism, however, should not obscure the importance of Christian liberty. Denominational covenants and confessional commitments must not be treated cavalierly by members or congregations. Yet, synod must be sensitive about the danger of sounding like it is issuing top-down imperatives about how parents should educate their children. We call all CRC church members and particularly officebearers to keep in mind, and be faithful to, the vision of Christian education stated in our Church Order (new wording):

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools where the Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

At the same time, in keeping with the careful wording adopted by Synod 2003, we note the importance of affirming Christian liberty along with, and as an essential ingredient of, our full commitment to Christian day school education: “That synod, while respecting the various educational choices

made in good faith by families, reaffirm the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to and promotion of Christian day school education from the elementary level through college and university" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 619).

The preceding caution about Christian liberty may be one of the reasons for the muting of CRC pulpits on the subject of Christian education. There may, however, also be another reason. Some pastors and church members believe that explicit calls from the pulpit to support Christian education run the risk of offending new members who have no experience with Christian education. We celebrate the diversity that has blossomed in our denomination since 1955. The increases include Christians from other cultures, Christians new to the faith, and Christians from other denominations. Therefore, there are many more members of the CRC today than in 1955 who did not grow up nurtured in the Reformed world-and-life view and its entailments, including our denomination's commitment to Christian education. For that reason, this is not a time for the CRC to mute its voice in support of Christian education but to raise the volume. In our new circumstances, it is all the more imperative that we articulate for this generation, in refreshingly new ways, the gift of our Reformed story and its cosmic vision of Christ's rule over all things. If we wish to remain a confessionally Reformed church, we cannot shy away from this grand story. We must not relegate our commitment to Christ to a small private sphere of life but must insist on a full-orbed cultural and public discipleship. Christian day school education, which fills in the cultural education of children in areas where churches and families cannot, is thus an integral part of the Christian community's discipleship training for service in Christ's kingdom. To remain true to ourselves as a Reformed denomination, we need to give ourselves permission to tell the whole Reformed story both to those who are new to our denomination and to those who already cherish it. Reformed Christian day schools are an integral part of that story.

Here, we again remind synod and the CRC of the close, symbiotic relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and Reformed Christian day schools. This link is first of all a faith—confessional—world-view link rather than an institutional one. School and church share beliefs and convictions. As a confessional church in a voluntarist North American church environment that is not hospitable to confessional denominations, the CRC faces the same struggles for identity and survival that other confessional bodies (e.g., Lutheran) do. North American evangelical Christianity is pragmatic and sectarian (in contrast to the more established church life of Europe). Doctrine and theological reflection take a decided second place to revival strategies that nurture church growth. It is in such situations that therapeutic emphases triumph over truth and faithfulness. Not only is being happy more important than being faithful to the truth, being happy is also more important than being holy. A church that prizes truth and faithfulness to a rich confessional tradition does not have an easy time maintaining its identity as a confessional church in North America.

It is precisely here that Reformed Christian schools provide the CRC with support and additional resources for maintaining its Reformed identity. Reformed Christian schools shape the world-and-life view of students who go on to become ordained or lay leaders in CRC churches. These are the sorts of leaders who understand the Reformed vision; who

practice it in their families, vocations, and civic life; and who will insist on preaching and worship that nurtures commitment to and love for the Reformed faith. This means concretely that Christian Reformed pastors must themselves be educated in a Reformed worldview framework. Preferably, this would be an education that extends from kindergarten to seminary, an education that grounds pastors in the cosmic, catholic vision of Christ's rule over every square inch of creation, the hallmark of a Reformed vision of the kingdom of God.

Here we need to address a sensitive potential misunderstanding and objection. There is a chance that the previous two paragraphs will be read as saying something to the effect: Be careful who you let in and especially to whom you give leadership positions in the CRC. Leadership positions should only be given to lifelong members of the CRC who have been inculturated through participation in all the right CRC institutions. We understand why such an interpretation *could be* inferred from the preceding and recognize that in today's climate there may even be some who will construe our position as exclusive or perhaps even racist. Most emphatically this is not what we are suggesting. We value and affirm the growing racial and ethnic diversity of our denomination. At the same time, we do those who join us as well as our heritage a disservice if we fail clearly and vigorously to proclaim, celebrate, and bear joyful witness to the great and grand vision of Reformed Christianity. If this becomes problematic, we must face the question of whether the CRC wants to remain a confessionally Reformed church. We believe that the CRC and Reformed Christian education need each other and should support each other in their common commitment to Christ's rule over all things, including culture and society. The Reformed faith is under pressure in North America, and faithful resistance to the spirit of the age makes it imperative that church and school sing from the same score. Only when pulpits enthusiastically and clearly proclaim the good news that Christ is King will our communities gladly and generously support Christian education. Only if Christian schools remain true to that vision will they produce the kind of lay as well as ordained leaders the CRC needs now and in the future.

FAQ 8.1: How can officebearers in the church and parents whose children attend Reformed Christian schools meet the concerns expressed in Church Order Article 71 "to establish and maintain good Christian schools where the Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation is clearly taught" and to see to it that "children [are] educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant."

A. The following list is basic though not exhaustive:

1. Insist on good preaching that presents a full-orbed Reformed worldview.
2. Train council members well on the essentials of Reformed faith, polity, and practice.
3. Have elders discuss the education of children during home visits.
4. Encourage openness in the school toward parents as well as high levels of parental involvement in, and consent to, school curriculum and activities.

3. Conflicts about Christian education

Reflection about developments since 1955 leads us to conclude that the partnership between the CRC and Christian day schools has changed significantly in those years. In 1955, in most CRC communities, the constituents of church and school were nearly identical. That allowed for both church and school to legitimately assume certain things about each other. That is no longer possible. Not only does the CRC membership include those with little experience and understanding of the CRC's commitment to Christian education, but the Christian schools themselves include parents with little background or understanding of the Reformed life- and world-view. This presents us with new challenges as well as new opportunities to reaffirm our confession and to renew our commitment.

This is also a good place to address the additional mandate given to our committee to consider in greater detail "the nature of divisions and brokenness in churches, where not all families have equal resources, commitments, and sensitivities regarding Christian day school education" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 631). We observe once again that our original mandate only asked us to address the first issue—finances—and that finances once again appear as the first item on the list in our enhanced mandate. There is good reason for that. Apart from financial constraints, the issue of conflict in commitments and sensitivities would be no different from other areas of church conflict such as women in ecclesiastical office or worship style. This is a point worth emphasizing. When it is suggested that ministers and councils should be neutral with respect to Christian education because of sensitivities in the congregation—e.g., public school teachers and/or supporters in the pews—what is being suggested is a principle that seems unworkable as a general rule. The CRC includes among its membership those who passionately believe that women in office or not, contemporary worship or traditional, are imperatives flowing from a Reformed understanding of Scripture applied to our day. It may or may not be possible to achieve a consensus compromise—as the CRC has attempted with women in office—but the principle of neutrality is not possible.

Each congregation, council, and pastor, however, must recognize two distinct issues with respect to Christian day school education: (1) even when Christian day school is uniformly supported and successful in a community, its very success may have unintended negative social consequences; (we shall not repeat our earlier discussion at this point but do alert the reader to section III as well as to Recommendations C and I); and (2) it is important to be aware of the exact place where a particular congregation is at with respect to Christian education. The first step in conflict resolution is awareness. Bearing in mind the social complexities of integrating new members into established communities, we must still commit ourselves to discipling new members and new churches in all aspects of Reformed doctrine and life. Christian education is not unique here. Recognition that parents do have responsibility and liberty means that their spiritually guided and biblically informed choices must be respected. They may, however, also need to be challenged on occasion; that, too, is the hallmark of responsible biblical pastoral guidance in preaching and teaching. Our committee is not inclined to, and we believe synod should not, attempt detailed case studies or issue specific rules for application in concrete

instances. The guidelines we suggest here must suffice; wise pastors and councils, as always, must apply them to their situations and specific circumstances.

We judge, therefore, that the new circumstances of the CRC in 2005—greater diversity, new members, and new churches—are a wonderful opportunity to bear witness to the Reformed vision of an integral Christian education. We have an opportunity to disciple our own members in the riches of the Reformed tradition and to bear witness and give leadership to the many other Christians who are increasingly opting for some kind of Christian education.

With the growth of non-Reformed Christian schools, Christian Reformed parents face many new choices that were unknown and even unavailable fifty years ago. Here the close relationship between church and school again asserts itself. As CRC parents face increasing numbers of choices, it is imperative that CRC church leaders provide pastoral guidance to such parents by clearly, vigorously, and enthusiastically proclaiming the cosmic vision of the Reformed faith. Not all Christian schools are alike. Reformed Christians should be able to recognize the shortcomings of a school that only adds piety and chapel to an otherwise secular curriculum. They should also know and be able to articulate the difference between Reformed Christian schools and charter schools that emphasize traditional family values but lack a broader Christian perspective in all subject matters. In our increasingly complex world, it is important that CRC congregations are guided by God's Word as articulated in the Reformed confessional and theological heritage. The urgency of our times requires this. A decreased level of support for Christian education in CRC pulpits would be an unhealthy sign of a loss of Reformed identity and diminished allegiance to the Reformed confessions. The church and the school stand together in mutual support of a Reformed witness to our world. It would be fitting for synod to give thanks to God for bringing the CRC *anno domini* 2005 to new circumstances of greater diversity and declare this to be a wonderful opportunity to bear witness to the Reformed vision of an integral Christian education wherever it takes place—in the home, school, or church. Synod should also urge all the members and churches of the CRC to give leadership to the many other Christians who are increasingly opting for some kind of Christian education.

In summary, all of these changes in culture, society, and the CRC require nothing different from what we have always been called by the Lord to do as a church. We do, however, have an obligation to do so in new ways—taking new and different circumstances into account with renewed vigor. We now go on to consider the vexing matter of educational *choice*.

4. New options in education: Choice

From its early history, the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination has strongly encouraged and supported Christian day schools (see section IV). These schools developed over time from parish schools to parental, society-governed institutions. The content of education also evolved over time from a concern to maintain the Reformed confessional heritage by maintaining the Dutch language to a desire to Americanize and eventually to provide students with a Reformed world-and-life perspective in order to

be effective kingdom workers in God's world. Over the past one hundred years, members of the Christian Reformed Church have established hundreds of Christian day schools throughout North America. During this time, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has time and again reaffirmed its full commitment as a denomination to Reformed Christian day school education, prior to the most recent reaffirmation in 2003, some fifty years ago in 1955.

Since synod's 1955 statement, perhaps the biggest change in education is the wide range of choices available to parents and their children. For most of those years prior to 1955 the choice was simple: either the local public school or a Christian school. Today, while state and provincial governments continue to mandate education for children from approximately five years old to youth in their teens, many governments have allowed for more choice by parents as they comply with mandatory education at this age level. The various choices can be categorized as follows:

- *Government schools*—schools most commonly known as public schools and controlled by state or provincial governments.
- *Charter schools*—schools permitted to operate with individual, corporate, or government ownership, funded by state or provincial governments, with permission to educate in nontraditional ways.
- *Alternative public schools*—Christian schools that function within the structures of a public school board (e.g., Edmonton, Alberta). *Note:* The United States parallel is magnet schools.
- *Private or independent schools*—schools controlled and governed by a society of supporters (parents and others) or by a founder and followers of a certain philosophy of education.
- *Parochial schools*—schools operated and controlled by a denomination or an independent church.
- *Home schools*—schools wherein one or both parents teach the children, usually in the home.
- *Virtual schools*—systems of education that can be purchased using the World Wide Web.

a. The need for discernment

At the root of the many and varied reasons for this explosion of choices is a growing dissatisfaction with public school education. Public school education has become one of the most significant and divisive political issues in our North American public square, the premier arena for our culture wars. The major change from the beginnings of the nineteenth-century common-school tradition in both Canada and the United States is that a common school depends on a common, unified vision of society and moral order and such a common, coherent, unified, public vision simply no longer exists in North America. North American public education in the nineteenth century had as its basic purpose the enculturation of all children, but especially those of immigrant newcomers, into the ideals of Canadian and American citizenship—how to become a good Canadian or American. In both countries now, this ideal is elusive if not unachievable because a single notion of what it means to be a good American or Canadian is itself being questioned. One single, monolithic national ideal may be unrecoverable in our pluralist societies,

and, with its disappearance, the rationale and possibility of a *common* public school that does justice to all minorities as well as to the majority becomes practically impossible. *Pluralism* and *tolerance* have become the bywords for a multicultural society. Because schools are the principal communities of memory in a society, the place where common traditions, knowledge, and skills are passed on from generation to generation, the lack of the same inevitably leads to conflict, which is exactly what we are seeing in North America. If there is a crisis in North American public education, it is an identity crisis with competing visions striving for influence and control. This is the explanation for the rise of home schools, charter schools that emphasize values education, and multiple forms of Christian day schools.

This explosion of choice presents the Christian community with two major challenges: discernment and justice. With the rise of alternatives to public school education that embody many of the concerns of Christian parents, such as values education, Reformed Christian parents need to be discerning and carefully consider, for example, whether free charter schools really offer the same thing as Reformed Christian day schools. What may appear to be similar may in fact be quite different.

b. Educational justice

As the cost of Christian education, along with all education, continues to increase, cheaper alternatives to privately funded (in full or in part) Reformed Christian day schools will become more and more attractive. This is especially true for options such as charter schools that emphasize values in keeping with Christian morality. It is crucial, therefore, for the well-being of Reformed Christian day schools that financial reasons not be the primary obstacle for parents. For these reasons, various plans to expand *affordable* choices for Canadian and American citizens, especially for the poorest of our citizens, should be seen as a matter of justice. In a pluralist society, all parents, irrespective of their financial resources should have free opportunity to have their children educated according to the dictates of their consciences. Additionally, though there are indeed many choices available to parents, financial considerations make the choice very difficult for some parents. What is most troubling about the matter of finances is that the disparity between those who can and those who cannot afford to pay increasing tuition costs may in some cases fall out along racial lines. When the potent mixture of poverty, class, and race come together, there is a real potential for tragic and painful conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ. Such conflict and disunity is one of the most serious impediments to the gospel message. Synod 2003 recognized this when it passed four of our recommendations that encouraged diversity and justice out of conviction that denominational efforts to help all CRC members to be able to send their children to a Reformed Christian day school is one of the real tests of our commitment to become a more diverse church by dealing directly with matters of injustice and inequity. The following recommendations were adopted by Synod 2003 on diversity and justice in education:

7. That synod urge CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education. Congregations should seek professional legal and tax accounting advice when drafting such plans.

Ground: (d) Financial difficulty should not be a barrier that prevents church members from sending their children to a Christian day school.

8. That synod encourage CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to assist students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity, special needs).
11. That synod instruct the general secretary of the CRCNA to send official correspondence to the President and to representatives of the U.S. Congress, as well as to state governments and state legislators, calling on them to enact legislation that makes education choice without financial penalty available to families with school-age children. Similar letters are to be sent by the Canadian Director of Ministries to the Canadian provincial governments where appropriate.

Ground: (c) Educational choice is a matter of social justice. CRC members who have the resources are able to provide a Christian day school education for their children. It is the poor who suffer the most from lack of educational choice.

12. That synod encourage CRC members to make the matter of school choice and educational justice a matter of priority for prayer and action.

(Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 626, 627, 628)

In order to help synod come to an informed decision about what it should say in its advice to the churches concerning the matter of finances, it is important to know what the current situation is in terms of government funding. In Canada, particularly in the western provinces, the provincial governments contribute to the education of all children by contributing half or more of the cost of education for parents who choose independent (not governed by publicly elected boards) schools.

In the United States, the wall erected between church and government has prevented almost all government support for the education of children whose parents enroll them in nonpublic (the term of choice in the United States with the same meaning as independent in Canada) schools. Some parents benefit from funds for special needs' students or from funds for poor families. Some states provide ancillary services such as transportation, some textbooks, technical equipment, and social services. Recently, a few states have adopted small tax-credit programs that provide scholarships for students attending nonpublic schools. The constitutional legitimacy of certain voucher programs was affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2002 when it upheld the constitutionality of the Cleveland, Ohio, voucher program.

The closest relationship between Reformed Christian schools and the government is in Alberta. The most visible example is the Edmonton Society for Christian education. For three years, this Reformed Christian school society, founded by CRC members with a strong Dutch ethnic similarity, has contracted with the Edmonton Public Schools as an alternative school within the public school governance. The Edmonton Christian School receives full funding from the city, its principal is appointed by the public-school superintendent, and all of its teachers have joined the Alberta

public school teachers' union. The contract allows, even encourages, the Edmonton Christian School Society to choose its own teachers and to carry out its clearly Christian mission. This option is now available throughout the province of Alberta.

From the preceding overview, we can see that some progress has been made in providing a more just way of funding Christian day schools. There is, however, still a long way to go, and the churches of the CRC and their members should continue to heed the urging of Synod 2003, noted above, by pleading and working for greater educational justice in North America. Disparity in educational opportunity based on economic ability is a grave injustice, and basing the availability of Christian education solely on CRC parents' ability to pay for a Christian day school education will make it difficult for CRC congregations and members to continue strong support for Reformed Christian schools. Our report addresses some of these concerns in greater detail in the next section.

When the multiplication of choices in education is combined with observations about the changes in the CRC, we must take note of new challenges to CRC members. There are numerous CRC members who teach or are otherwise involved in public education from elementary school to university level. The Reformed understanding of Christ's lordship means that we honor the desire to be ambassadors of the kingdom in public education, as difficult as that may be. The intention of parents to be a witness and a blessing in public education must also not be overlooked.

Our committee recognizes that these are complex and intensely personal choices facing CRC members. Furthermore, the church must not infringe on the Christian freedom of the believer (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.19) by requiring one and only one path of Christian discipleship. The intention to be a public witness to Christ in education can take different forms. What must not be forgotten, however, is that the CRC's traditional commitment to Christian day school education is not in the first place an individual matter but a covenantal communal matter. Synod 2003 both acknowledged and honored the legitimate diversity in the CRC along with the principle of Christian liberty as with wisdom and sensitivity it made its basic affirmation of support for Christian education:

That synod, while respecting the various educational choices made in good faith by families, reaffirm the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to and promotion of Christian day school education from the elementary level through college and university.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 619)

In this way, CRC members are called, with equal conviction, to maintain the communal commitment to institutions of Christian education and the recognition that Christian believers are called to free and discerning obedience. In addition to what we have already said about homeschooling, we would also call attention to the following issues.

In the previous subsection, we noted some of the reasons why many parents are demanding greater choice in education. For Christians, this must never become simply a personal selfish matter (let me have *my* share of tax money) but an issue of justice. One of the chief objectives of broad-based support for Reformed Christian education is to afford opportunity for parents who find the cost prohibitive to still provide a quality Christian

education for their children. It is unjust to have Christian day school education available only for the well-to-do.

The issue of public justice in education also has a broader dimension. The resistance to choice in education has the effect of creating a monopoly for state-controlled education. When alternatives to a public school monopoly are prohibitive (not to mention prohibited!) the very foundations of liberty and pluralism are threatened. The history of Reformed Christian education in the Netherlands of the nineteenth century is instructive here. As secular government authorities emptied day schools of all explicit religious teaching, orthodox Reformed believers attempted to start their own schools. While the law permitted such independent schools, bureaucratic obstacles as well as cost made establishing such schools very difficult. Abraham Kuyper's crusade for educational justice was not only out of concern for the children of Reformed Christian parents but also a matter of broader justice and religious freedom in the Dutch nation (see John Bolt, *A Free Church: A Holy Nation*, chap. 7). Kuyper realized that Christian schools, as free and voluntary institutions, provided a necessary counterweight to an intrusive state, particularly a secular state that was seeking to control the education of all children. The very existence of Christian schools stands as a witness to the lordship of Christ and as a testimony to freedom and public justice. As we consider the importance of Christian day school education, this must not be forgotten.

Finally, it must also be pointed out that Christian learning is itself a communal activity. This is more obviously true at the college and university levels where Christians in similar academic disciplines pool knowledge and resources in order to provide Christian perspective. However, it is also true of education issues at other levels, for example, matters of pedagogy. So, while we honor the liberty of CRC members in terms of their desire to honor Christ in education, we would also insist that institutional Christian day school education is an essential component of our *communal* responsibility as Reformed people.

5. Conclusion

When we consider together the changes in education—the changes we noted in our culture, in our society and church, and in the variety of choices made by Christian Reformed Church members—our committee remains convinced of the need, perhaps now more than ever, for Reformed Christian day school education. Synod 2003 reaffirmed that commitment; however, it may have potentially confused the church when it did not pass Recommendation E of our original report that synod request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to assist all CRC agencies in the implementation of the denominational strategy of including “Christian day school education in a full-orbed CRCNA mission program” (BOT Minute 2592, 3).

Grounds:

- a. Reformed Christian day school education is important for equipping a leadership for the CRC that is committed to the Reformed faith.
- b. In view of the growing secularization of public schools, the Reformed tradition's long practice of successful Christian education is an integral part of our Reformed kingdom witness and mission to our fellow

citizens. This is one of our distinctive contributions to the growth of God's kingdom in North America (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 361).

When synod defeated this recommendation, it may not have been aware that it was in effect thereby rescinding a synodically approved denominational strategy and CRCNA Board of Trustees policy. We judge that synod will want to clarify this anomaly, reaffirm its own denominational strategy, and are therefore resubmitting this recommendation with this report, with one additional ground, a ground that anticipates our further discussion of Christian education and world missions in section VII, C, 3.

- c. There is a growing awareness among evangelicals in mission work globally that evangelism and missions in our world are incomplete without distinctly Christian education at all levels. (See the theme issue of *Mission Frontiers* [25/2, March April 2003]: "The Scandal and Promise of Global Christian Education."

This will help the church as a whole promote Christian education "so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17, NRSV). Having considered in broad strokes the *context* within which Christian education takes place, we now examine more specifically the current state of support for Reformed Christian day schools.

B. *Rethinking support for Christian schools*

Within the broad Christian school movement, the Christian schools organized by Dutch Reformed immigrants have always had a close association with the Christian Reformed Church. From its denominational beginnings in the 1850s and through the large waves of immigrants into the United States in the 1880s and into Canada after the Second World War, these immigrant groups typically formed a church almost immediately. Next, these same groups formed Christian day schools. Although some of the earliest schools were parochial, well before the turn of the century a new model, inspired by Abraham Kuyper, took hold. Christian Reformed groups formed societies or associations to elect school boards to govern the schools. The society members were often the same people who were members of the church, but the two institutions were governed differently.

Although some parents may have thought of the schools as protection agencies for their children against the secular influences of the general culture, the philosophical statements of these Reformed Christian schools typically reflected a Calvinistic and Kuyperian purpose for the schools. These were not just schools "of the Bible," in the sense of pious practices of prayer and Bible reading; they sought to teach a worldview, a way of seeing all of life through "the spectacles of Scripture" (Calvin). These schools promised to help children learn in principle and practice the cultural mandate to be stewards of all of creation in Christ's name and to bring the rule of Christ to bear in all of culture. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" was the theme song.

Throughout the history of Reformed Christian schools, CRC members who chose public schools for their children have claimed that the CRC's aim for God's people to be salt and light in the world extends to their children's being witnesses for Christ in the public schools. These parents believed they were fulfilling the covenantal promises of Deuteronomy 6 through the Christian education they provided at home and in their church. These parents also

claimed that public schools employed many Christian teachers who could guide their children when conflicting worldview claims drew their attention in school. Some parents also argued that they wanted their children to learn alongside children with different ethnic and racial backgrounds rather than with mainly Dutch kids in the local Christian schools. Earlier in our report (section III), we noted that isolation and separation could be unintended social consequences of Christian day schools. Here we would reiterate the point we made then: This unintended consequence should not be used to undermine support for Christian education but rather call the church and schools to actively pursue ways of encouraging interaction with the broader local civic communities of which they are a part.

Today, the CRC is more racially and ethnically diverse than it has ever been before. Christian schools are too. Some Christian schools, whose enrollments were nearly 100 percent CRC members' children, now have fewer than 10 percent CRC children. Even in the communities that are still dominated by Dutch surnames, the parents who support the Christian school may represent many ethnic traditions and church affiliations. In large cities, the older Reformed Christian schools often retain governance in the hands of a minority of Reformed Christians while serving a majority of parents who want Christian education for their children but define that education as practice in piety, or moral values, or a safe environment in an unsafe culture. Now some Reformed Christian schools are considering enrolling children whose parents are not Christian but who desire a Christian education for their children.

Today, too, ecclesiastical cousins such as the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) are forming Christian schools across the United States. These schools are often parochial and clearly Reformed in perspective. As a denomination, the PCA has not emphasized Christian day schooling as has the CRC in its history. Susan Wise Bauer (*Heirs of the Covenant*) emphasizes the covenantal basis for Christian education but practically illustrates it by the church's Sunday ministry and homeschooling, passing off Christian schools as a third alternative for those who have the means for it.

1. The problem of inclusion

In the new millennium, the students within the Reformed Christian schools (most having membership in Christian Schools International, a support agency to these schools since 1920) come from many denominations and from independent community churches. Still, the number of children from ethnic and racial minority groups within the schools is certainly less than in the public schools nearby. Minority members of the CRC testify that their children do not always feel at home in the Reformed Christian schools—not charging overt racism but noting that the overwhelming majority of students still is Anglo. To many minority Christians, Reformed Christian schools still *seem* to be ethnically exclusive even if the schools make overt efforts to be inclusive.

The church and school must address all perceptions that create barriers to full inclusion of *all* members or students. It is not a sufficient or even appropriate response to say that these perceptions are wrong and should be corrected. Our concern in this report is the seeming decline in full support of Christian day school education within our CRC congregations. Finances have been cited as one reason for this decline, and our committee was given

the assignment to seek out denominational ways of addressing the problems arising from the growing cost of Christian education. If there are perceptions that Reformed Christian schools are exclusive—whether true or not—the church is duty bound to address this barrier as well. We must do what we can to change perceptions by helping to change the reality that gives rise to the perception, not to demand that the perceptions be altered.

Are Reformed Christian day schools exclusive? Are they islands of ethnicity that make it difficult to learn that the world is multiethnic and Christ's kingdom is inclusive? They are certainly not exclusive in intent. Many welcome ethnic minorities and include the honoring of cultural diversity not only as a major goal of the school but also test for it. Most Reformed Christian schools now have a service component in their curricula that teaches students to care for people unlike themselves and to seek justice and restoration within a broken and unjust world. In addition, there are Christian school districts, such as the Grand Rapids Christian School Association, that make a conscious effort to hire qualified minority persons and in addition provide scholarships for those who cannot afford tuition. While these scholarships are not intended only for, or restricted to, minority students, the demographic realities of the larger Grand Rapids urban area do bring about that effect. Synod 2003 encouraged congregations and groups of churches to initiate similar creative approaches that target students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools when it adopted Recommendation 8 (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 619):

That synod encourage CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to assist students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity, special needs).
(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 627)

2. Inclusion and evangelism

The objection that Christian schools erect barriers to becoming a more inclusive church has also been raised from a different angle. Questions are raised about whether church support for Christian day schools is a barrier to outreach by suggesting that Christian education is an essential ingredient of Reformed Christian discipleship. Does such an expectation ask new believers and members to accept a standard for membership that exceeds biblical and confessional requirements? Does the prominence of Christian education within our CRC communities create a psychological barrier for new converts or transfers from other denominations who do not have such an expectation as part of their own history? In addition, a concern for evangelistic outreach also gives rise to another concern—the issue of stewardship and priorities. Evangelistic outreach and a passion for the lost is said by some to be of greater importance for servant-stewardship than only serving our own children. We will not repeat here all our earlier observations about the relationship between missions and/or evangelism and education and our recommendation to the church not to elevate one at the expense of the other (Recommendation C) but only give a summary of the theological argument.

The church of Jesus Christ has been given a commission by its Lord to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV). This command is issued by the one to whom has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth.” The church’s mission, therefore, is framed by the narrative of God’s covenant and kingdom. The royal authority given to Christ is the fruit of his finished work. As the apostle Paul says about himself, he was “called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendent of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:1-4 NIV). What this means is that the commission given to the church by our Lord is not simply or only a royal proclamation of God’s kingdom that fulfills the covenant promises of the Old Testament. Rather, kingdom and covenant remain the foundation of *today’s* gospel mission. The church’s message of salvation still has covenant and kingdom as its content, a content that can be summarized something like this: Faithful to his covenantal promises to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3), God himself became incarnate in Jesus the Messiah who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation and ascended to send the Holy Spirit to empower the church for its mission. As the church acts in obedience to its Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes a participant in the grand narrative history of salvation. It does so as the undeserving recipient of divine grace (election) and as an active agent in God’s work of redemption as human history unfolds. In other words, fully recognizing that all salvation history is centered in Jesus the Christ, his visible presence in our world today is by way of his body, the church. The human Jesus is not with us but ascended (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 18). Yet, he indwells his temple-church through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19). The church is Christ’s *bodily* presence on earth.

Covenant and kingdom, therefore, are inseparable. Together they create the frame of a narrative that spans the ages—the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. The church’s mission is to tell that story to the world and, through word and deed, to invite others into the continuing narrative of redemption and consummation. God’s covenant promises give that narrative a depth of assurance. For those who put their trust in God’s covenantal promises in Christ, the story has a happy—no, a glorious!—ending: eternal life in full fellowship with God in a new heaven and new earth where there is no suffering, pain, death, mourning, or tears. This confident hope in the certain glory of the salvation narrative’s outcome is a necessary encouragement for the church’s pilgrimage in the dramatic unfolding of that narrative. The ground of Christian hope is a confidence in the covenantal promises *because* Christ’s royal power and authority make it clear that he is not only *willing* to save (as his voluntary suffering and death make clear) but also *able* to save. Our loving Father *is* Almighty God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 9). From a Reformed point of view, covenant and kingdom are the two divine realities that form the basis for and the content of all Christian education. As the CRC’s *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* puts it (paragraph 50): “In education we seek to acknowledge the Lord by promoting schools and teaching in which the light of his Word shines in all learning, where students, of whatever ability, are treated as persons who bear God’s image and have a place in his

plan.” Thus, together, in their own distinctive ways, church and school seek to draw the sinful and lost human beings away from the life-scripts that lead to death and into the covenantal narrative of God’s kingdom, a story that reaches its conclusion in glorious eternal life.

3. Christian schools are necessary for the church’s mission

Focusing more on practical questions, the church’s mission is to bring lost people to Christ and to nurture them in a life of Christian discipleship. A Reformed vision of discipleship is full-orbed; it acknowledges the reality of calling in all vocations not just the gospel ministry. It was in this spirit that when Synod 1997 adopted a new Vision and Mission statement for the church it set forth the following goal under the rubric of kingdom extension:

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God’s claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earth keeping, racial relationships, etc.).

(Agenda for Synod 1997, p. 61)

This goal flows from a thoroughly Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship. It also requires training for church leaders that cannot be done by the official, institutional church itself. It is training that can only be done through Christian education in Christian schools at all levels. The official church (institute) does not have the mandate or the resources to teach disciples of Christ the fine points of earth-keeping or global political strategy. To import these teaching goals into the church’s education program runs the risk of politicizing the church. We acknowledge that the call to be obedient to Christ’s lordship in all of life means that the church’s nurture of Christian faith and discipleship must be global in its scope because the gospel is wide. At the same time, the church also realizes the limits of its specific mission and acknowledges that it needs the Christian school for its own mission, particularly in training successive generations for effective leadership in the church that is committed to the Reformed faith. The church also needs the school to equip its members for broader kingdom service in the wide range of human vocations. It is the school, not the church that prepares Christians for discipleship in politics, science, art, medicine, and law. The church has no mandate or competence to teach mathematics or economics; the school does. Reciprocally, the school needs Reformed churches that will proclaim this cosmic vision of Christian discipleship and support the school with its prayers and its offerings.

The perception that evangelism and discipleship are separate goals in the church is therefore a false dichotomy in our judgment. Being forced to choose one over the other overlooks the missiological significance of the school itself as a public testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is precisely this global vision of Christ’s kingdom that attracts many evangelicals to the Reformed faith and to Reformed Christian schools. In addition, many Reformed Christian schools have as part of their mission statement that children will learn to become “responsible disciples of Christ.” The Reformed Christian schools have served the Christian Reformed Church as the agency that the church uses to teach its children what discipleship means, what faith in Christ has to do with the world, and what following the Lord to extend his rule in the world means. Prior to the time when

Christian Reformed churches had full-time, trained youth ministers, and still today in places where youth ministry is done by volunteers on an ad hoc basis, the Christian school functions as a very effective youth group.

4. Inclusion and the problem of finances

We must still face the troubling questions raised earlier in this section. No one will deny that racial injustice, snobbery, elitism, selfishness, and materialism afflict Reformed Christian school communities, as they do the CRC itself. Also, the disparity in income in the CRC, sometimes within the same congregation, is perhaps greater now than thirty years ago. In addition, the CRC now includes congregations that are ethnically diverse and congregations that are predominantly one ethnic or racial minority. Add to these disparities the different foci in alternative Christian schools, e.g., one school emphasizing personal piety and character development while another centers its purpose on students' learning and putting into practice a Reformed worldview, and we can see that CRC parents face an array of challenging and sometimes painful choices. It was in recognition of the need of guidance for members of the CRC that our committee was appointed by synod.

However, it is not the matter of choice as much as the inequities among CRC parents' ability to pay tuition for Reformed Christian schools that threatens the continuation of strong churchwide support for Reformed Christian schools. Furthermore, the trend for invested parents to pay a higher percentage of the cost of Christian education has decreased the percentage of CRC parents using these schools. When the CRC last endorsed Christian day school education in the 1950s, the parents paid less than two-thirds of the total cost, with the nonvested parents of the churches covering one-third of the cost. Today most Reformed Christian schools expect more than 90 percent of their revenue from tuition. In Canada, most schools charge tuition by *family*, with the same charge for parents with one participating child as with five or more. In the United States, many schools now charge tuition by the child. That means that with a yearly tuition of \$3,500 per child on the average, the one-child family only pays that amount while the four-child family pays four times that amount.

As the CRC looks to the future to fulfill the congregation's vows at baptism, it must consider specific means of financial help so that *all* the church's children may learn a Reformed Christian pattern of discipleship in the home, church, and Christian day school. What kind of just means should the CRC endorse? It seems to us that the following features ought to be part of any plan that a congregation chooses to provide financial assistance so that all its children have the possibility of receiving a Reformed Christian education:

- Provide access for every covenant school-age child, regardless of the financial ability of the parents.
- Include Christian day school support as an essential part of the church's general budget, just as it does line items for youth ministry, pastors' salaries, and evangelism.
- Teach all members that financially supporting Christian day school education is part of the covenantal vow made by the congregation when the church's children are baptized.

- Encourage all parents to make use of Reformed Christian schools.
- Provide financial support to all children, regardless of the parents' need, and encourage all members to be the stewards of their resources for all of the church's ministries. Decide the amount of support for every child based on the cost of education in local Reformed Christian schools and the ability of the whole congregation to pay.

5. Homeschooling

At this point, we also need to consider the new (since 1955) phenomenon of homeschooling. Synod 1955 (*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199) did not even consider this possibility. It simply stated as a self-evident truth that "formal schooling as we know it today has become a necessity in the complex society of the modern day. Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon others to assist them in their task." The synodical statement goes on to link parents' entrusting their covenant obligations to others by appealing to the traditional baptismal liturgy that states "and cause them to be instructed therein. . . ." Still, today some CRC parents believe that the best way to carry out their covenantal obligations is to instruct them at home. Certainly the CRC must respect the choices these parents make to conduct schooling of the heart and mind at home, with themselves as the prime teachers. The church ought to support them with prayer and with encouragement to teach a Reformed view of the world. Where Christian day schools are available, the church needs to encourage a spirit of good will and cooperation between those who home-school and those who send their children to Christian day schools. Where no Christian day school exists, parents should be encouraged to work toward establishing one, and, in the meanwhile, the church has a responsibility to be supportive of parents who homeschool.

However, in the same way that parents who send their children to a Christian day school have a covenantal obligation to be supportive of those who homeschool, so should homeschoolers support Christian day school education. Christian education of all the children in a congregation is a communal task. The church's first responsibility is to see to it that it is possible for all the church's children to receive a Reformed education in a Christian school. We believe that in a school, children see a Christian worldview from different angles, test that worldview in a safe place, and learn from others the nuances of practicing that faith in a fallen world. Learning in a Christian school in a broader community than the home helps children both broaden and deepen their understanding while also giving them both the opportunity and the responsibility to give their learning to others. Learning the truth in community underscores the covenantal promise made by the congregation at the baptism of every child to contribute to every child's education, when we say together, "we do, God helping us."

At this point, we also need to add the caution given earlier about possible *unintended* negative consequences of homeschooling. The same danger of separation and isolation applies as it does to separate Christian day schools. Parents who homeschool are sensitive to this and often join organizations of homeschooling parents to coordinate activities and provide significant social settings for their children. However, the risk of

separation from local civic communities is as real for separate homeschool organizations as it is for Christian schools. The format and structure are different but the unintended consequence may be the same. The social antidote is also the same: Encouragement to significantly interact with local civic communities.

In addition to the commitment of such parents to accept full responsibility for their children's upbringing, there are often elements of protest targeted at specific local Christian schools. Here we also call on CRC members who support Reformed Christian day schools to listen carefully to the reasons parents give for homeschooling. To take communal covenantal accountability seriously, Christian school supporters, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members need to pay attention to the concerns and critique expressed by brothers and sisters in Christ. Honoring diversity does not mean silent criticism but involves speaking the truth in love. Here, too, we see how integrally the communal life of the congregation is tied to the education of its children in the home, the church, and also in the formal education of the daily classroom. No system for decreasing the financial injustice of access to Reformed Christian schools will on its own make either the church or the school more ethnically or racially diverse. However, if the CRC provides financial assistance to all the church's children so that they can receive a full-orbed Christian worldview education, it will demonstrate that the vows the congregation makes at baptism are real and really essential for the CRC to carry out its mission in the world, to extend the rule of Christ through the Christian education of its children in all three agencies of faith nurture—home, church, and Christian school.

FAQ 9.1: Our child is just not comfortable in our local Christian school. She just has not been included in the activities of her classmates but made to feel unwelcome.

A. Stories like yours are heart wrenching, and how we wish it just wasn't so and pray it won't stay so. Unfortunately, it does happen that children who for a variety of reasons do not feel that they fit in (did not grow up in the community, did not go to the main "feeder" school of a local Christian high school, are of a different race or ethnic background, of a different class and level of wealth, and so forth) are not treated with the kind of love and acceptance that our Lord expects of us in any community of believers. That is a tragedy and calls for self-examination and repentance followed by conversion of practice. Our Christian schools need gifts and contributions that a diverse student body brings. Schools benefit from the fuller fabric of human diversity, and we pray that you will be able to find other parents who share your concerns and that you and your child will have the courage to stick it out and call the school community to be true to itself as an inclusive Christian community. (Also, see Recommendation I.)

6. What the CRC now thinks about Christian education

With the assistance of Dr. Rodger Rice, former director of the Calvin College Center for Social Research, our committee prepared two survey questionnaires, one for CRC councils and another for CRC pastors. A

detailed executive summary of each survey can be found in Appendices A and B. The complete survey data will be available to the synodical advisory committee that considers this report. In this section of our report, we will highlight some of the features of the surveys that were striking to the committee.

First, a few observations about the survey process. The surveys were sent to all *active* pastors in the CRC and to all councils of organized and emerging churches. The return rate for the pastor's survey was 57 percent (493/864) and for the council survey 66 percent (655/989). The committee is grateful for the cooperation of pastors and councils for this good rate of return. All forty-seven classes were represented in the survey as well as a good range of differently sized churches, though there was a small overrepresentation, when compared with denominational statistics, of churches in the 301-600 member range as well as an underrepresentation of small churches (1-150 members). We also need to caution that the exact figures in the survey summaries are still only the *perceptions* of the respondents and not hard data. We shall first consider the council survey and then the pastors' survey.

The council survey indicates an encouragingly high level of committed support for Christian day school education. Churches are believed to have positive relationships with their local Christian schools (94 percent), are largely united in their support for it (71%), and a high percentage report pulpit support (79%) and strong elder support (73%) for Christian schooling. In addition, 75 percent say that their church encourages its young people to attend a Christian college. At the same time, there are contradictory results that are less encouraging.

Notwithstanding the high level of encouragement to young people to attend a Christian college, the estimated median percentage of students who actually do attend one is reported as only 23 percent. If this figure is correct, we consider this a matter of concern, especially when combined with the estimated mean figure of 60 percent of children attending Christian day schools. The latter figure was estimated to be 67 percent fifteen years ago and suggests a decline in support for Christian education. What we can say with confidence, therefore, is that the churches report that only one-half of their children attend a Christian day school. Furthermore, of the churches that report that their children attend a Christian school, 31 percent report that none of their children attend a Reformed Christian school. As a committee, we wonder if these data reflect a growing lack of awareness of Reformed identity and concern about Reformed identity with all its implications for Christian discipleship. If so, this is a trend that has profound implications for the future membership and leadership of the Christian Reformed Church.

There are other conflicting signals in the survey data. Although a high percentage of councils report that they support Christian education and even 77 percent say they encourage parents to have their children instructed in Christian day schools, 75 percent also say that officebearers are not necessarily expected to send their children to Christian schools. What is of special concern to us is the high percentage (63%) of councils who disagree that the baptismal vows require parents to send their children to Christian schools and who also disagree that the baptismal vow implies

congregational financial support for parents of school age children. In effect, this means that Church Order Article 71 is effectively disregarded by 75 percent of our churches. When it comes to the promotion and financial support of Christian day school education, the results defy easy characterization or pattern. It is not clear to the churches who has the primary responsibility for promoting Christian education. Financial support is the most commonly cited means of promotion, though 29 percent of the churches report providing no financial support. Where financial assistance is provided, it is based on need and given after a review of family finances. We judge that, while there is support for Christian education in our churches, there is little creative or coordinated promotion or planning for congregational financial support.

Here we also need to report that financial need is the most commonly (71%) cited reason by parents for not sending children to a Christian school. Though the results of the pastors' survey show some variations with the council survey, the general perception of their church's relationship to Christian education is very similar. Pastors, too, report a high level of support for Christian education, a good working relationship between church and school, and significant unity in their churches in support of Christian education. Pastors also indicate that there is a lack of coordinated strategy for promoting and financially supporting Christian education. Finally, pastors also give the cost of tuition as the chief reason why some parents do not send their children to Christian schools. Nonetheless, conflicts and contradictions are found in the pastors' survey as well.

First, we note a key difference with the council survey. While 75 percent of the councils report that there is no expectation that officebearers send their children to Christian day schools, 63 percent of pastors report that they are expected to send their children. This is an interesting difference, but the reason is quite apparent: Pastors experience pressure to send their children even when councils do not explicitly require it.

For the committee, the question that concerns us the most is Q. 9h in which 69 percent of pastors disagree that baptismal vows by parents require them to send their children to Christian day schools. Perhaps the word *require* is the stumbling block here. If the question were formulated something like: "Is sending children to a Christian day school a legitimate implication of the baptismal vow?" perhaps the figures would have been different. Still, the fact remains that 63 percent of councils and 69 percent of pastors who responded disagree with the traditional CRC understanding that the baptismal vow is necessarily linked to Christian day school education.

Here again there is also countervailing positive response. In response to the question about the arguments and reasons pastors give to promote Christian education (Q. 10) some 160 gave "worldview issues" as a primary reason and used phrases such as "lordship of Christ over all areas of life," "Reformed perspective," "integration of faith and learning," "cultural mandate," and "Kuyperian worldview." Some 100 did relate Christian education to baptismal vows and the responsibility of parents to fulfill their covenantal obligations. This indicates that covenant and kingdom remain key elements in the theological grounding of Christian education for

Christian Reformed pastors. It may also indicate a shift in that kingdom emphases are slightly more prominent than covenantal ones.

Our final comment deals with a troubling issue in our CRC communities. At the same time that ethnic and racial minorities in the CRC raise concerns about not being fully included in our Reformed Christian schools (see above) both the council survey (87 percent) and the pastors' survey (68 percent) report that the ethnic minority members of their churches feel comfortable attending Christian day schools. Whatever the reality, perceptions clearly differ. It is a Christian imperative that all CRC members, including ethnic minority members, carefully examine their perceptions. At the same time, the burden is on the majority culture in the CRC to do all that is in its power to make our communities welcome and safe places that encourage diversity.

Parents whose children attend Christian day schools and CRC members who support these schools need to stay informed and be vigilant in helping their schools be truly inclusive communities where diversity does not create unnecessary barriers to any student's full involvement in the life of the school.

VII. Special circumstances and considerations

A. Congregational conflict

In our historical sections, we pointed out that conflict in the CRC about Christian education is not new to our time. Levels of enthusiasm have varied from community to community and church to church. On occasion, such as the *Banner* discussions in the 1930s between editor Rev. H.J. Kuiper and Rev. J. Vander Mey, disagreements about how essential Christian day school education was for maintaining a Reformed identity and vision in the CRC were publicly aired with considerable passion. As we address the matter of contemporary conflicts about Christian education in our church and congregations today, we should not make the mistake of feeling overwhelmed by wholly new and unprecedented obstacles but recognize that in some respects the challenges remain the same while in other respects they are different. Because of that, we may be confident that many of the resources available to generations past are also available to us. At the same time, we also are provided with wonderful new opportunities not available to generations past.

Synod 2003 asked our committee, to consider in greater detail "the nature of divisions and brokenness in churches, where not all families have equal resources, commitments, and sensitivities regarding Christian day school education" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 631). This is an expansion of our original mandate (from Synod 2001), which had only asked us to address the first issue—finances—in this list. It is not clear to us what else we can say about churches where not all families have equal resources. We spent a significant amount of time addressing this issue in our original (2003) report and judge that if churches widely follow the guidelines we presented there and now again in section VII, D as well as section VIII, creative ways can be found to make Christian day school education a reality for any child whose parents are willing to make it a top priority (indeed, this is often the case already).

Dealing with brokenness, divisions, and wide variations in commitments and sensitivities and their impact on our ability to find common ground with

respect to Christian day school education, seems to us a more difficult issue that deserves separate reflection in this report. It is also a more primary issue than the resources issue. History is replete with examples of people and groups who accomplished seemingly impossible tasks with limited resources because they were united in their mission, single-mindedly committed to accomplishing it, and collectively willing to sacrifice for it. So, in spite of the fact that financial barriers are very real, we do not want to lose sight of the possibility that there are many ways to gather resources for Christian day school education if everyone involved agrees that this is a high priority.

We also want to make two other points that relate to this. The first is that it is unwise to artificially separate out commitments and sensitivities from resource issues because the process of struggling communally with limited resources both requires sensitivity and commitment and contributes to development. Most likely, it was precisely this kind of virtuous circle that blessed the impoverished immigrants who started the Reformed Christian day school movement in North America more than a century ago. Thus, we do not want to be paternalistic and assume that it is all but impossible for small or poor communities to start or send their children to a Christian school. Indeed, the success of the home-school movement is a testimony that schools with as few as one student can achieve remarkable results. We judge therefore that the new circumstances of the CRC in 2005—greater diversity, new members, and new churches—should be viewed not as a problem but as a wonderful opportunity to build community and bear witness to the Reformed vision of an integral Christian education.

The second point, which flows from the first, is that authentic Christian education can only emerge out of communities that are making tough decisions about resources. We judge that Christian schools that serve only the financially self-sufficient will not ultimately be successful at Reformed Christian education. Neither, however, is poverty a virtue with respect to Christian education. Both poverty and wealth pose dangers that need to be counterbalanced by a rich sense of community and commitment. So, we would argue that no church whose poor, middle class, or wealthy congregants have a long list of *wants* that are more important than God-centered education for the children of the church (and the denomination) has the right expect a full measure of God's blessing on their endeavors.

1. A pastoral response

How then should churches pastorally respond to situations of conflict arising from inequity of resources or competing visions and commitments? If neutrality is not possible, then neither is it possible to satisfy the sensitivities of all members. For example, a passionate endorsement of Christian education may ruffle the sensitivities of public school supporters. At the same time, a lukewarm, unenthusiastic acceptance of Christian education as one valid option will offend Christian school teachers and supporters. It cannot be the primary concern of the church in such contexts to avoid offending everyone. Dancing around a subject is but one of a number of ineffective strategies for dealing with conflict that has plagued our congregations.

As CRC parents face increasing numbers of choices, CRC church leaders must provide pastoral guidance to such parents by clearly, vigorously, and enthusiastically proclaiming the cosmic vision of the Reformed faith. Not all

Christian schools are alike. The urgency of our times requires that CRC congregations be guided by God's Word as articulated in the Reformed confessional and theological heritage. A decreased level of support for Christian education in CRC pulpits would be an unhealthy sign of a loss of Reformed identity and diminished allegiance to the Reformed confessions. The church and the school stand together in mutual support of a Reformed witness to our world. In addition to this, churches must identify and sort out the specific (and likely complex) underlying causes of conflict in their midst and move in the right direction, irrespective of their starting point.

2. Sources of brokenness and conflict

Congregations and their leaders cannot begin to deal with brokenness unless they are honest about its sources. At the broadest level, this involves secularism, individualism, and materialism that, even in the absence of significant social and cultural differences, will result in widely different ways of seeing the world within a single congregation and make it difficult to maintain community. Each of these will in its own way promote a divergence in commitments to a Reformed perspective, thus increasing theological differences within Reformed thinking and diverging views of the importance of Christian education and what it means to be communally responsible for our children's education. In such a cultural environment, differing ideas of the strengths and weaknesses of a specific Christian school, local community or public school, or home school will either be suppressed or expressed in a way that confirms the lack of community. Busy schedules and higher priorities will make discussions of other important issues, such as wide variations in financial situations within the church or the communal financing of education almost impossible.

Many other things also undermine community and contribute to the inability of church members to agree on how they should respond to Reformed Christian day school education. We are not referring here to differences that stem from the diversity of gifts that strengthen the body of Christ but to differences rooted in the sin and brokenness of people's lives that cloud our vision, distort our priorities, cause us to confuse uniformity with unity, and blind us to processes for reconciliation. Sin, or brokenness, also permeates individual lives and is at the root of fragmented families, racial tension, selfishness, and moral compromise. It leads to structural injustices, unwise decisions, and overwhelming personal or family problems that together sabotage relationships and overwhelm our ability to cope with the complexities and challenges of modern life. It results in our inability or unwillingness to carry out our offices effectively or obediently (parenting, giving, mentoring, preaching, and so forth) and creates tensions among young people in the church (also related to their spiritual and relational immaturity). Perhaps most importantly, it leads to a migration of our hearts as modern stresses (e.g., the demands of two full-time jobs, child rearing, school commitments) and stress relievers (e.g., TV, movies, sports) deprive the church of much of our time, talents, and energy.

Unchecked over time by intentional efforts to build the body of Christ, these same forces are likely to obscure both the true causes and the potential methods for resolving conflict. Church members will carry on for long periods of time with little understanding of the damage done by unresolved

conflict or the benefits of well-managed conflict. Preoccupied by other less important things, they will neglect the hard work of identifying problems, clarifying goals, increasing love, building fellowship, communicating effectively, and so forth. They will overlook the importance of identifying and equipping congregants who have conflict-resolution gifts, or of using Scripture and the accumulated wisdom of conflict resolution specialists to reduce and manage conflict. Thankfully, the kind of Christian education that attempts to bring God's word to bear on all areas of life holds promise as a powerful antidote to this fragmentation. It can prepare and equip congregations to ferret out and address the above-mentioned sources and manifestations of conflict far more thoroughly than we can in this report.

Our focus must remain on the church's role in dealing with brokenness and differing sensitivities and commitments. It is called to disciple all members in all aspects of Reformed doctrine and life; Christian education is a part of that. Recognition that parents do have responsibility and liberty means that their spiritually guided and biblically informed choices must be respected. They must, however, also be challenged on occasion; that, too, is the hallmark of responsible biblical pastoral guidance in preaching and teaching. Without this kind of challenge and the right goals and creative strategies, some of our churches may very well remain for decades in precisely the kind of conflict quagmire that precipitated this additional mandate to our committee. Each congregation, council, and pastor, however, must know where a particular congregation is at with respect to Christian education and apply these guidelines to their situations and specific circumstances.

3. Goals, strategies, and conflict resolution

To that end, synod should encourage churches to develop goals, strategies, and conflict-resolution recommendations for all Christian Reformed Churches. First, we believe all congregations should emphasize that healthy differences are evidence that the body is as it should be (diverse) and should plan for ongoing opportunities to strengthen the body by using the diversity of gifts to teach each other and build one another up. In doing so, however, we must emphasize that our Christian liberty is bounded by God's law and by our church communities and authorities. Within this environment of constrained diversity, a congregation should work toward enthusiastic congregational endorsement of Christian day school education, especially from pastors and church leaders. That has been our historic position and was endorsed by Synod 2003. Support for Christian day schools flows very naturally from our doctrine and our convictions about covenant, kingdom, and mission (see later in this report). Christian education is a hallmark of Christian Reformed identity, and there should be no need to apologize for our enthusiastic support. It should be our goal that all members of the congregation eventually (over the decades) catch this vision, even if they choose alternative forms of education for their children.

To make this a reality, each church should put a continuously evolving strategy in place that holds pastors accountable to address key subjects from the pulpit (see also our comments in section VI, A, 2). At the least, this should include sources of conflict and brokenness; the critical importance of combating worldliness and community breakdown in the church;

covenant, kingdom, and mission as foundations for Christian education; prophetic advice to congregants on their role as society members and parents in calling Christian schools to obedience and justice; and financial stewardship and the use of resources in community. They should also use stories to call attention to Reformed spiritual forebears who were neither Dutch nor CRC, draw parallels between past immigrant communities, on the one hand, and present inner-city or small-town communities, on the other, in their struggles to establish Christian schools (e.g., Sussex and Lawndale). Follow-up on these important issues could be done through adult education programs.

In addition, each congregation should adopt a formal plan for building community that includes making sure the church community is afforded adequate time in people's schedules to effectively carry out its task (e.g., replacing outside activities with church activities promoting fellowship, simpler lifestyles, or inter-generational contact). This should include conscious attempts to break down barriers between Christian and public school students, perhaps in the form of annual meetings between Christian school representatives and representatives from supporting congregations to discuss why the church should continue to support the school and to seek insights from church members on the impact that the school is having on churches and families. To build a common mind, congregations will need to develop new membership and adult education classes that connect the concepts of covenant, kingdom, and mission to Christian education and also institute plans for cost sharing to make it obvious that the church and/or denomination cares about Christian education for the children of all families.

Building community also means recognizing that different subgroups within a community may have different sets of priorities and ways of relating to each other. If one wants to distinguish between people who are task oriented and those who are more concerned about building relationships, then it is fair to say that traditional, ethnically Dutch CRC communities are closer to the task oriented end of the spectrum. In communities where proponents of Christian education lack significant time in their schedules to get together with others to build relationships and only to get together to perform tasks, it is likely to be more difficult to generate congregational support for Christian day school education with persons and families who are relationship oriented. In our diversity, we need to know our own cultural predispositions. For example, when indirect communication patterns or the use of shame are persistent in the cultural roots of some church members and groups, reconciliation can be very difficult to achieve.

Finally, we need to address the process of conflict resolution. Goals will not be reached and strategies will be ineffective without action steps to accomplish their intended purpose. So, we recommend that churches identify people with the gifts and respect to resolve conflicts. Then, we recommend that churches invest in these people so they can guide orderly discussions about the role of churches in promoting Christian day school education. This way, assumptions are honestly examined, differences are accepted, serious attempts are made to view problems from various angles, problems are attacked instead of people, resolution replaces justification, and people look forward (opportunity) rather than backward (blaming)

and covenant with each other to follow the chosen alternative. These leaders should not avoid conflict (thereby dooming both the goals and the relationships), try to achieve goals at the expense of relationships, give up goals to preserve relationships, or compromise along the lines of the world. Rather, they must recognize in faith, that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to reach difficult goals while simultaneously building up the body of Christ. Over time, our congregations will be blessed by increasing numbers of leaders skilled enough at conflict resolution to ensure that dialog (rather than debate) takes place by bringing people (not just spokespersons) with differing opinions together in a safe place to share information, express their feelings honestly, listen carefully, withhold judgment, admit their doubts, and seek understanding. These leaders will also look for concrete measures of progress in community building and conflict resolution and use lack of success relative to these measures, if necessary, to change strategies.

Perhaps most importantly, these leaders will echo what the congregation is hearing from the pulpit by calling repeated attention to a finite number of clear biblical directives on communication patterns (Prov. 18:13; Eph. 4:15, 29; Phil. 2:14-16; James 1:19), humility (Matt. 7:3-5, Eph. 4:2, Phil. 2:1-4), submission (Eph. 5:21, Heb. 13:17), face-to-face contact (Matt. 18:15-20), reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24), and unity (John 17:20-23, Eph. 4:3-6, Col. 3:12-17) that will become part of the vocabulary of the congregation. We believe that maintaining a focus on these kinds of passages (or entire chapters such as Ephesians 4 or Philippians 2) over an extended period of time, while also doing the hard work of hammering out what can and should be done educationally for the children of the church, will enable congregations to experience, as never before, the joy, blessing, and fruit of authentic Christian community.

We conclude by noting that this is yet another example of the inseparable nature of the mission of church and school. The gospel in all its fullness must be preached, but turning head knowledge into healthy interpersonal habits and community building needs the day-to-day reinforcement of Christian teachers and schools. Likewise, the kinds of leaders so desperately needed in the church to resolve conflicts and promote reconciliation in Christlike ways are best prepared for this task in God-centered schools. In addition to prophetically calling attention to the sources of fragmentation in our churches, the CRCNA should encourage Christian schools and colleges to give more attention in their curricula to skills and strategies for ushering in shalom.

B. Small churches

1. Mandate

Synod 2003 gave our committee the additional mandate to explore:

The means by which small isolated churches can fulfill their baptismal vows as it relates to Christian day school education.

Grounds:

- 1) The current report was written primarily with clusters of churches as its context. However, many small and / or isolated churches may require different means to fulfill their baptismal vows.

- 2) The unique context and struggles of small isolated churches should be addressed by the denomination.

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 631)

For several reasons, we did not want to presume that smaller churches necessarily faced more significant obstacles in meeting the church order expectation of Christian day school education. While it is true that our 2003 report, particularly as it addressed the question of finances, was indeed “written with clusters of churches as its context” (ground 1), the same cannot be said of Church Order Article 71 in general. Going back to the Synod of Dordt and throughout the CRC’s history, this article has stood as the church’s commitment regardless of circumstances or context. In addition, to the degree that some communities may face additional hurdles in establishing Christian day schools, this is not a new problem of our day. The extensive discussion carried on in the CRC during the 1920s and 1930s, highlighted by the ongoing journalistic debate between H.J. Kuiper and the Rev. J. Vander Mey, wrestled with the same issue. In communities where there are no Christian schools, how important does the ideal of Christian day school education remain? Should CRC folk who live in communities where there are good public schools be satisfied with that? The issue that synod asked us to address is not new.

It is also important to note that being small and having limited resources is not a sufficient reason for parents to be satisfied with education that does not fully honor the lordship of Jesus Christ. The remarkable rise of home schools in the last decade of the twentieth century, along with associations and organizations dedicated to assisting homeschooling parents do their work better, bears ample testimony to the fact that motivation and determination rather than lots of money are the key ingredients to establishing alternative avenues and venues for the education of covenant children in ways that are in keeping with our Christian faith and the claims of Jesus Christ on our lives.

2. Information from churches

For these reasons, before making observations and dispensing advice, the committee gathered information by sending a survey to fifty of the small or isolated churches in the CRCNA, all under 150 members. Twenty-six churches responded to the survey. Eighteen of the churches indicated there was a Reformed Christian school or other Christian schools that parents could choose from. This suggests that though they were small they were not isolated. Two churches said that some parents in their congregations used home schools. Eighteen responses reported that a significant number of parents in their churches used the public schools. It is not apparent that this phenomenon is either more or less than would be the case in larger churches.

One survey question asked: What does your council and congregation do to implement Church Order Article 71 and the congregation’s baptismal vow to help instruct these children in the faith? Twenty-three percent (6/23) said they do little or nothing. Forty-seven percent (11/26) thought they implemented Article 71 via church programs such as Sunday school, Gems, Cadets, youth groups, SERVE, and daily vacation Bible school. Others

talked about encouraging the use of Christian schools and helping financially if possible.

Another question asked was: If there is no Christian school in your area, how do you integrate faith and learning? Those churches to whom this question applied responded, “nothing” or referred to the church youth programs that the CRCNA has endorsed. Several responses indicated a desire to receive helpful suggestions and identified things that would help them. The responses established a need for strong leadership at both the congregational and the denominational level. The councils appear to be open for direction as they diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools in which the biblical, Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over creation is clearly taught.

3. Observations and advice

The most important advice that synod can give to small churches is no different from that given to all the churches of the CRC: Encourage parents to establish good Reformed Christian schools whenever possible and send your children to those schools. For small churches that are in proximity to a Reformed Christian school but run into additional financial restraints because of size, we repeat Recommendations 7 and 8, adopted by Synod 2003:

7. That synod urge CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education. Congregations should seek professional legal and tax accounting advice when drafting such plans.

Grounds:

- a. Christian day school education is both a communal, church responsibility and a parental obligation.
 - b. A covenantal intergenerational financial support plan for the Christian day school education of all the children in a congregation is a fitting response to the vow made by the congregation when a child is baptized.
 - c. This flows naturally from the mutual stewardship and accountability that characterizes healthy congregations.
 - d. Financial difficulty should not be a barrier that prevents church members from sending their children to a Christian day school.
8. That synod encourage CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to assist students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity, special needs).

Ground: This is consistent with the CRC’s commitment to greater diversity as reflected in synod’s adoption of the study committee report from the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God. (See *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 595-619.)

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 626, 627)

We call attention to these two recommendations to highlight two important principles that should govern our stewardship of Christian day school education:

- a. Financial support for Christian day school education is a communal responsibility, both locally and regionally. This principle deserves to be

applied in individual congregations and in larger areas (classes) involving multiple congregations.

- b. It is a healthy perspective to consider small churches as an important part of our denominational diversity. Whether these be new church plants in suburbs, inner-city ethnic and racially diverse churches in large urban areas, long-standing Native congregations, isolated Midwestern rural congregations, or whatever, this variety enriches the CRC as a denomination and our covenant together links us spiritually and brings with it obligations of financial cooperation and assistance. In sum, we do not suggest any direct correlation between small churches and racial or ethnic diversity, though there may be some overlap, but rather that it is constructive for us to regard all small churches as an important ingredient of our denominational diversity whatever the racial and/or ethnic makeup.

Here we would also highlight an example of a creative, stewardly address to financially needy churches in a regional manner. Classis Grand Rapids East in May 2004, after discussing a thorough analysis of Christian school participation and tuition costs for children in every church in the classis, “agreed to establish a committee to develop a proposal for a program and fund for providing financial assistance to congregations facing unusually difficult financial situations relative to Christian School tuition” (Minutes of Classis Grand Rapids East, 12.4). In Classis Grand Rapids East’s context, this is a direct response to the challenge of promoting greater diversity and at the same time addressing financial need.

We also observe that many small churches struggle with implementing Church Order Article 71. We have some concern about the churches that responded to our survey question by answering that they do nothing to implement Church Order Article 71 as well as those who, having no Christian school available, said they do nothing to help the children of their church integrate their Reformed faith with their schooling. At the same time, we are encouraged by the sincere efforts of many to provide Christian nurture for the church’s children through traditional types of church programming (church school, Gems, Cadets). In addition, most of the recommendations we now present were developed from suggestions received from our survey of the small churches.

We believe, with respect to Church Order Article 71 and Christian day school education, that churches would be well-advised by the following:

- That councils of small churches continue to encourage preaching that is consistent with the Reformed world-and-life view and that recognizes and promotes Christ’s lordship over all areas of life as articulated in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.
- That councils of small churches urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with the Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation. Where possible, councils shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools.
- That councils encourage parents who need to supplement the day school education with faith-based materials, or parents who home school, to

consider publications from organizations that produce excellent curricular materials that support the Reformed vision of Christian education such as Christian Schools International (CSI), Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC), Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS), or Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS).

- That churches be encouraged to intentionally use Faith Alive Publications' curriculum and materials based on a Reformed vision for as many of its youth and adult educational programs as possible.
- That churches encourage their youth to attend Reformed Christian colleges and universities via scholarships, campus visits, and other ways (Recommendation 14, *Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 629).
- That those responsible for adult education in the churches promote the Reformed vision of Christian education by (1) encouraging the discussion of books and articles supporting this vision, (2) inviting speakers who are insightful advocates of Christian education to lead workshops, and (3) including materials on Christian education in their libraries.

The various parts of this advice envision a continuing use and possible strengthening of excellent resources that are already available to churches and to parents. In addition to that, we believe that the CRC denomination through its publications office, perhaps in cooperation with CRC Home Missions and /or CSI, could create a curriculum *for church use* in cases where parents are unable to establish a Christian day school. Such a curriculum, purposefully designed to help students who are not able to attend Christian day schools to integrate their Reformed faith with their school lessons, could be used in after-school clubs, parent-led discussions in the home, or creatively used in already-scheduled church education classes.

C. *Schools and evangelism*

The first part of the additional mandate given to our committee by Synod 2003 was to explore in greater detail "the nature of the relationship between the churches' commitment to Reformed Christian schools and the churches' work of doing evangelism." The mandate specified the following areas:

- 1) Reformed Christian day schools in the United States.
- 2) Reformed Christian day schools in Canada.
- 3) Reformed colleges and universities.
- 4) The role of Christian education in world missions.

Grounds:

1. The specific issue of how Christian schools and their support relate to the call to reach out evangelistically to gather God's growing family is critical to the future of both the educational and evangelistic commitments of the church.
2. This issue (Ground 1) has not been directly addressed in the current report. While the important work of training church members for mission is included, the relationship between the churches' commitments to missions and to Christian day schools has not been sufficiently explored.

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 630)

In what follows, we will set forth some general principles that flow from what we have already stated in this report and then apply them directly to the specific areas as requested.

Earlier in our report (section V), we spelled out the theological reasons for keeping kingdom and covenant, on the one hand, and missions and evangel-

ism, on the other, as inseparable and coordinate obligations of the Christian community. Both the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:27-30 and the mission mandate (Great Commission) of Matthew 28:18-20 are rooted in the twin divine realities of kingdom and covenant. As we said in conclusion:

In both Genesis and Matthew, the Sovereign One royally commissions his representatives, gives them a task that involves establishing the king's 'dominion' over the earth and people, and covenantally promises his blessing. However we understand the practical out-working of this in the life of God's people, it is clear that theologically these two are inseparably linked in the providential purpose of God for his people, in his creation and redemption plan for their well-being. We ought, instead to look for a way theologically to unite them rather than set them over against each other.

The first principle that we would underscore here is, therefore, that which is articulated in our recommendation to synod that synod advise the members and churches of the CRC to consider the responsibilities they bear for Christian education and for doing evangelism as equally important and complementary and declare that support for Christian education should never be used to undermine the work of evangelism and that evangelistic outreach should never be given as a ground for failing to support Christian day school education. Both of these tasks flow from a Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship rooted in the covenant and kingdom of God as well as the mission of God's people in the world. Consideration of this dual calling and recognizing the diversity of gifts and interests of Christian believers are the essential first steps in diffusing potential tension and conflict about Christian education within congregations.

Starting from the premise that evangelism and Christian education are twin responsibilities for Reformed Christians and that neither may be used to downgrade the importance of the other still leaves us with the question of how the church as the primary *institution* for evangelism, and the school can cooperate in doing the Lord's work while respecting each other's distinct task. Note that our report is directed to the church and does not propose to dictate to the school as to how it should fulfill its mission. Rather, we are simply suggesting some basic ground rules for how church and school together can do the Lord's work in his world. This brings us to the second presupposition that must inform our response to the synodical request: If Christian Reformed Churches and Reformed Christian day schools are to cooperate effectively in doing the Lord's work, they both need to be committed to an explicitly Reformed set of beliefs and worldview that is grounded in Scripture, shaped by the Reformed confessional and theological tradition, and cosmic in its scope. In other words, both church and school should have similar understanding of biblical truth and a common vision of Christian discipleship that, in the case of the Reformed tradition, is a cosmic vision rooted in the lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation. We recommend that synod encourage churches to study, engage in self-examination, and then recommit themselves to the Reformed faith we profess to have in common. Reflection, self-examination, and covenant renewal are always valuable spiritual exercises. The occasion of the CRC's revisiting the question of Christian education is a great opportunity for the denomination to spend some quality time considering the meaning of our Reformed identity. It

is thus our recommendation that synod encourage all the member churches of the CRC to dedicate significant time in the church calendar year 2005-2006 to explore what it means to be Reformed. Among the resources we would recommend for this purpose, in addition to our report, are the following: The BOT statement "What It Means to Be Reformed: An Identity Statement," available from CRC Publications; the Denominational Ministries Plan, adopted by Synod 2002, found in *Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 63-89; and *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (Study Version).

From a common understanding of our Reformed faith and its implications for Christian discipleship in today's world, it is possible for us to begin to sort out different tasks and responsibilities where cooperation between church and school is helpful and necessary and where concerns for maintaining the distinct identity and task of each need to be emphasized. Specifically addressing our assignment to explore the nature of the relationship between the churches' commitment to Reformed Christian schools and the churches' work of doing evangelism, the first observation we make is that, in a Reformed view, *institutionally*, evangelism is properly the task of the official church and not the school. This is important to emphasize from the outset because there are Christian schools, usually closely tied to specific congregations, who do see the task of the school primarily in terms of conversion. Christian teachers in Reformed Christian schools are rightly concerned about the souls and salvation of their students; that should go without saying. Although it is not their primary purpose, Christian schools are mission fields—places of refuge and tender learning whereby children, some of whom may have hard hearts or have never felt the Spirit spurring them to vibrant belief, will learn to become disciples before choosing to be one.

Furthermore, that Christian teachers in Reformed Christian day schools would encourage their students to be good witnesses in the world, evangelistically as well as vocationally, is also to be expected as a matter of course. God's call to a student about his or her life's calling may come early or late, be quite specific or very general, and place the student in the world next door or half a world away. Christian schools that have a mission mandate will persistently tell students, "Go!" These schools will demonstrate a passion for the world, have an urgency about the lost who are not hearing the full message of the gospel, and tune students' talents to be emissaries of light—as zookeepers, homemakers, pastors, pharmacists, or farmers.

The salvation of a child's soul or mission outreach to the nations is, however, not the *raison d'être* of a school in the Reformed understanding. Neither is catechesis or faith nurture. These are properly the responsibilities of home and church. Similarly, it is not the church's task to teach science and geography. Reminding the church's children that this is God's world, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and then encouraging them to pursue educational and vocational goals in which they can develop and use their God-given gifts to his glory and the fulfillment of his mission, is of course always important. It is a key way in which the church in its preaching and teaching ministry supports the cause of Christian education. Our point here is simple: A Reformed understanding of discipleship is a seamless web; Christ is Lord of all; and family, church, and school together serve the mission of God and his people.

Our specific mandate to examine the relationship between the church's evangelistic task and its commitment to Christian day school education can be

considered from two related angles. First, is it appropriate for the church to make use of Christian day schools to achieve its own evangelistic purpose of gathering God's growing family? Conversely, recognizing that the school is not an evangelistic institution, does it nonetheless have a legitimate evangelistic task?

It may come just as much of a surprise to synod as it did to our committee to discover that this very same issue was fiercely debated in the CRC and at its synod some fifty years ago. A brief overview of that discussion and synodical decision is instructive for our consideration today. In 1950, synod appointed a study committee regarding mission policy with a mandate "to formulate the principles of indigenous mission work," to apply these principles to the church and its mission agencies "with special reference to finances, educational institutions and medical work on the mission field," and more specifically "to formulate the specific application of these principles to the Indian Mission Field" (see *Acts of Synod 1950*, pp. 79-80).

The committee reported to Synod 1952 with a majority and minority report. The key difference was in the answer given to the following question: "Is it proper and advantageous for the church to use schools, full-fledged schools, whether day schools or boarding schools, as an aid to evangelization" (*Acts of Synod 1952*, p. 209)? The majority answered in the affirmative, the minority dissented. While Synod 1952 approved the spirit and general content of the study committee's principles, it asked the committee to continue and report to the 1953 assembly. Faced once again with a majority and minority report, Synod 1953 went with the minority report in its general conclusion only and not in its detailed statements. This general conclusion was taken to mean "that Education on the mission field be limited as much as possible to a literacy program in keeping with the performance of the evangelistic task—viz., the direct oral and written transmission of the Gospel, and the encouragement of native covenantal schools" (*Acts of Synod 1953*, p. 86). In its grounds for siding with the minority position, synod appealed to the principle of indigeneity while insisting that "it allows sufficient flexibility to cope with extraordinary situations" (*Acts of Synod 1953*, p. 87). Synod also excepted the Indian Mission field from the principle it had just adopted.

Your committee has recognized that the Indian field is extraordinary, in that it is a Heathen Mission within our borders; that it has a long history of Educational Missions; that Synod in the past has made certain pronouncements which are in conflict with principles now adopted; and that it has special problems with respect to language, competition in the field, etc. Hence a strict application of indigenous mission principles is not at present possible in all details. However, your committee does believe that a determined effort ought to be made to apply these principles.

(*Acts of Synod 1953*, p. 88)

We do well to note that concern about indigeneity and independence, along with sphere-sovereignty arguments, were not taken absolutely even by those who held to the minority position that was adopted by synod. They were concerned about an important principle but freely acknowledged that special circumstances might arise in which the failure to establish schools was a greater evil than the violation of pure principle. One of the key architects and spokesmen for the minority position, Dr. Harry Boer, set forth the case in a *Reformed Journal* article, "The Place of the School on the Mission Field" (May

1952, pp. 8-9). Boer is firmly convinced of the importance of Christian day schools and insists “that at the earliest opportunity [Christian] schools should be brought into being and that they should form a major factor in molding the life of the Christian community and in undergirding the church.” Because the gospel brought by the missionary is the gospel of the kingdom, Christian education is its natural implicate and “the missionary will encourage and the parents will desire Christian education for their children.” The result is the triple cord that is not easily broken—church, home, school.

However, Boer also observes, “it is altogether possible that when the Christian community comes to the point where Christian schools are needed,” that indigenous resources might be altogether lacking. In such cases, “the church may do on the mission field what it often does at home—it extends temporary assistance.” On the domestic front, this may take the form of financial aid, on the mission field it may require many other resources as well—trained personnel, facilities, organizational and administrative assistance, and so forth. It is worth pointing out that missionary Harry Boer, a lifelong tireless advocate for increasing mission and evangelistic effort by the CRC, passionately believed that proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom would lead to the establishment of Christian day schools; they were the natural implicate of the gospel of the kingdom. Also important for our purposes in this report is the conviction by this dedicated missionary that home, church, and school are a seamless communal web; they all need and support each other.

With the help of this historical perspective and ecclesiastical precedent, we can come to the following conclusions with respect to the church and the use of educational institutions for evangelistic purposes:

1. Church and school need to safeguard their distinct identity and task. It is wrong to fault churches for not establishing Christian day schools or schools for not being evangelistic. The Christian school is properly an extension of the covenantal home and has as its task the nurture and training of covenant children to become active participants in the story of God and his people in the world.
2. There are times in mission situations where it is appropriate and an act of obedience for the official church to directly establish and support schools. The CRC did this, for example, in the New Mexico mission field. To avoid creating dependence and in the hope of establishing healthy independent indigenous churches, such direct [denominational] control of Christian day school education should be seen as exceptional, and the goal of indigenous ownership should be the highest priority.
3. What is appropriate in mission contexts overseas is also legitimate in North American mission situations, especially in cases of great need.
4. Where direct involvement in educational work as a means of evangelism is not called for, the church should still encourage missionary personnel to consider domestic or overseas teaching opportunities as avenues for evangelization. (See section on world missions below.)

There are many areas of the world where direct church-based or parachurch-based mission activity is difficult or impossible and where educators in primary, secondary, or university-level schools can teach English as a second

language as well as other subjects. This is an important area of mission opportunity today, and our consideration of the question of how to relate missions to education must take it into account.

We are a committee of the church and our message is for the official church, the Christian Reformed denomination, and not directly for the Christian day school. Yet, in answer to the question of whether or not independently established schools may be considered to have an evangelistic task, we once again borrow from the majority report of the 1952 Synodical Study Committee on Mission Principles and Education. The majority insisted that it was appropriate for the church in its work “to use any means which is congenial to the Gospel”; that “schools can be and are a great help to the Gospel”; that “it is not improper for the Church to maintain and conduct such schools”; and that this vision “fits with the Christian concept of the Gospel” (*Acts of Synod 1952*, 211-16, *passim*). In speaking of the appropriately evangelistic task of the Christian school teacher, the majority said:

There is nothing incongruous, as we see it, in the Christian educator aiming at leading his pupils to the Lord. . . . As a Christian, he has not only the right but the duty to point his pupils to the Lord. To tell him that he may only teach his subjects but may not influence his pupils to choose definitely for the service of God, is to ask the impossible of him as a Christian educator and to cripple him in an unwarranted manner in the performance of his task. If he does make it his aim so to influence his students, along with the proper teaching of his courses, he is not deviating from his proper task as an educator, he is just being a good Christian educator. How could he do otherwise and be a real Christian teacher?” (*Acts of Synod 1952*, p. 216-17)

In conclusion, the majority insisted: “We do not feel the force of the argument — Let education be education and not be used for conversion. We feel that the two, education in the Christian sense and conversion, are so closely related that they can very well be combined in a Mission school as an aid to the Gospel” (*Acts of Synod 1952*, p. 217).

The majority then set forth in skeletal form key principles that should govern schools in mission situations, principles that are still valuable for us today:

1. Their *Character*

These schools are to be part of the whole Mission program. They are not to stand by themselves, much less to overshadow the evangelistic program or take the place of the preaching of the Gospel. And they are not to be confused with parental, covenantal schools to be established after a Christian community has come into being.

2. Their *Aims*

- a. To develop the knowledge and capacities and personalities of the pupils;
- b. To instill a Christian world and life view into the pupils;
- c. To break down heathen beliefs and attitudes and superstitions in the pupils;
- d. To supplement the teaching given by the evangelistic agencies;
- e. To help bring the child to the Lord, without falling into “Child Evangelism”;
- f. To provide roots for an intelligent native church membership.

3. Their *Curricula*

- a. A thorough academic training is to be given, comparable to that in corresponding public schools, but with a Christian approach;
- b. To this are to be added thorough Bible courses;
- c. There should be personal guidance as much as possible;

- d. The native language and history and customs and lore should be used as much as possible.

Finally, the study committee recommends the principles of native style of building, native control and use of physical equipment, use of native talent, and eventual native (parental) financial self-sufficiency and full administrative management through a Christian school society (*Acts of Synod 1952*, pp. 217-18).

Making use of the school as an indirect means of reaching out beyond the Christian community also takes place in mission contexts apart from the Native ministry in New Mexico. Here it may be helpful to call attention to one example of a school that consciously altered its enrollment policy in order to reach out evangelistically to its community: the Calvin Christian School Association of Grandville, Michigan. The association's admission policy revision was inspired by the earlier version of this report and its emphasis on mission evangelism. New student applicants are admitted to the Calvin Christian schools as transfers from other CSI schools and in situations where believing grandparents desire a Christian education for their grandchildren. Children are accepted whose parents are members of an "evangelical Bible-believing Christian church where Christ is preached as 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life' and the Lord of every aspect of our lives." In such cases, parents must be in agreement with the school association's statement of belief and mission and provide a home that gives moral and religious training to children with a willingness to support the school's programs morally and financially.

However, the revised admission policy also makes allowance in the event a non-Christian family applies for admission. In such cases "the applications will be reviewed by a committee which may grant and /or require an interview with the family." This committee consists of "the Superintendent, the principal of the school children would attend, the Board President or Vice-President, the Education Committee chair, and the pastoral adviser" (emphasis added). This committee is to ascertain the level of parental support, the legitimacy of the desire for a Christian education, and whether there is "a plan to familiarize the family with Christianity and encourage church attendance."

We believe that the preceding is a model illustration of church-school cooperation in an evangelistic mission. The school remains a school; its task is education. Yet, it enlists the advice and support of the church and provides the same in return to the church as together they reach out with the grace and love of Christ to enfold lost and seeking people into the way of Christ. The school and church are partners in the commission given by our Lord to disciple the nations and teach them all he commanded. We suggest that such cooperation is especially appropriate for Reformed Christians and Reformed congregations and communities. We reach out, disciple, and teach. Church and school are not competitors but partners in the mission of God and his people in the world. Full recognition must be made here for the limits of such evangelistic outreach because the character of the school as a Reformed Christian school could be jeopardized by a critical mass of students who lacked full commitment to Christ's lordship. In the remainder of this section, we shall summarize the implications of these principles for the CRC in North America, for Reformed colleges and universities, and for world missions.

1. North America

Our mandate specified that we examine the relationship between our twin commitments to mission evangelism and Christian education in the United States, in Canada, for Reformed colleges and universities, and for world missions. As a committee, we recognize the significant differences between the CRC's situation in the United States and in Canada, notably in the fact that many Canadian provincial governments provide varying levels of assistance to Christian day schools while there is no support in the United States. However, in our judgment, on the particular question before us—the relationship between evangelism and Christian education—there seems to be very little difference either in principle or in practice. We have chosen, therefore, to consider our two nations under one continental heading in keeping with our denomination's name, the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The first observation we make is that North America is a mission field. The obligation to reach out to the lost in our near midst has always been with us, but the imperative to do so becomes even more clear in our day when the growth of secularism, renewed paganism, and the active presence of all the world's major religions is on our own doorstep. In that context, we note that the mere presence of Christian day schools in our public square is itself an evangelistic witness to the power of the gospel of the kingdom. Good Christian schools that are publicly recognized *as Christian schools* remind a secular and pagan world that Jesus Christ is Lord of life, that religion is all-encompassing, and that faith cannot be relegated to a strictly personal and private sphere of human subjectivity. We must not forget that our witness as Christians has an institutional component to it. The existence of Christian day schools should be celebrated and their mission encouraged.

Indirect, institutional witness, however, is secondary to intentional, explicit proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. We share the concerns of the 1950 study committee reports referenced earlier in this section that the school remain a school and not become a church and that the church not become a school. Institutionally, day school education is not the responsibility of the official church; evangelism is not the responsibility of the Christian school. At the same time, *in missionary situations*, especially in cases of great need, we affirm the legitimacy of church-initiated educational efforts, bearing in mind the appropriate cautions that these are extraordinary and should be temporary and not permanent. The goal should be to strive as soon as possible toward indigenous ownership and governance. For example, there seems to us no good principle reason why an inner-city mission congregation should not initiate the establishment of a Christian day school, even providing resources of finance, personnel, and space. New church plants might even begin with a core group establishing a Christian school and then nurturing a new church fellowship from the base of the established school. It is worth noting that some post-World War II immigrant communities in Canada built facilities for Christian day schools first, using them for worship on Sundays, and only later built specific worship facilities. In other cases, church facilities were used for many years to house the Christian day school. Synod should not suggest rules here but encourage creative, local initiative. What synod should encourage is that its members and congregations think *integrally*

about the comprehensive witness of our Reformed faith in our world. CRC mission activity in North America is to be guided by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship with a view toward establishing solid families and communities and Christian day schools as well as worshipping congregations. Integral thinking, visioning, and planning means that our missiological and evangelistic efforts need to keep the goal of Christian day school education in mind when planting new churches or reviving old ones. This is the historic position of the CRC and remains part of the denominational vision and mission statement adopted by Synod 1997. The BOT's denominational strategy statement put this into the following operational terms:

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earth keeping, racial relationships, etc.

(Agenda for Synod 1997, p. 61)

From this, we believe it is appropriate for synod to encourage CRC members who are actively involved in Christian education to consider their calling to be evangelists in a threefold sense: (1) In their personal lives and conduct as teachers to demonstrate their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and use all appropriate means to nurture the faith and spiritual development of their students. (2) To pursue their vocations as a means of testifying to the lordship of Jesus Christ and in their subject areas bear witness to this world. (3) To pursue creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic, either in specific mission situations (e.g., teaching English as a second language) or by encouraging the schools in which they work to be creative in reaching out to the lost with the good news of the gospel.

2. Reformed colleges and universities

Most of what has already been said about the church's mission in North America is applicable to our Reformed colleges and universities. They are, after all, integral parts of our Reformed witness on the North American scene. Thus, their very existence is also an evangelistic witness in an increasingly secular society, a testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ; their existence is to be celebrated and their mission and work encouraged. College faculty and staff, too, have opportunities for teaching in mission situations where church and parachurch opportunities are limited or nonexistent. Colleges and universities, however, also have additional institutional opportunities that are worth noting. For one thing, they are involved in global networks as well as North American ones. Institutional links with small third-world schools in mission situations are an invaluable means of making resources available for education and evangelism alike. Here we would call attention to a potential risk among Christian educators as we move up the ladder of educational accomplishment. In the advancement of learning from kindergarten to university, it is generally true that the increasing complexity of the subject means that teachers are required to spend more of their energy on the subject and, because of normal human finitude, less on the student. The *academic* requirements of college and university teaching are heavy, and the risk is that concern for and attention to the personal, spiritual dimension and needs of students becomes

secondary and eventually unimportant. The school is a school and not a family or a church. That is indeed true, but using that slogan too cavalierly puts educators in the risky position of becoming indifferent to the spiritual and yes, evangelistic, component of their calling. Reformed Christian colleges and universities need make no apology for their reputations as academically excellent institutions. On the contrary; that, too, is witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ over the human mind. Academic excellence can, nonetheless, become a spiritual snare, diverting our attention from the integral vision of Christian discipleship we have tried to sketch and defend in this report.

Reformed colleges and universities, should, therefore, be encouraged to see themselves as being in a global mission context and be urged to guide their work by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship in which academic concerns do not overshadow the spiritual and evangelistic components of the educator's task.

In addition, CRC members who are actively involved in teaching at the college and university level should be encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists in a threefold sense: (1) In their personal lives and conduct as teachers to demonstrate their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and use all appropriate means to nurture the faith and spiritual development of their students. (2) To pursue their vocations as a means of testifying to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in that way bear witness to the world. (3) To pursue creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic, either in specific mission situations (e.g., teaching English as a second language), or, in the case of those teaching at our Reformed colleges and universities, by encouraging the schools in which they work to be creative in reaching out to the lost with the good news of the gospel.

In connection with Reformed universities and colleges in North America, we note that synod gave our committee no specific instruction about Calvin Theological Seminary and training for ministry in the CRC. Perhaps this was understandable because a synodical study committee was in the midst of coming with a plan for alternate routes into CRC ministry. Now that synod has made the decision to establish a Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) "to encourage the development of pastoral leadership, to propose standards for synod, and to oversee the processes leading to candidacy" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 616), we recommend that synod also require explicit instruction in and agreement with the CRC's stance on Christian day school education in the standards for all CRC ministry candidacy. This report could serve as part of the basic essential required reading for ministry candidates.

3. World missions

There is very little to add here other than to reaffirm the points made earlier. Educational mission work is an important, perhaps one of the most important, means of reaching many otherwise personally unreachable people with the gospel. We only note here that CRWM has recognized this and has made educational missions an important part of its ministry. CRWM presently does support the educational work of missionaries in a variety of places such as Academia Los Pinares, Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Christian Academy in Japan, Tokyo, Japan; Faith Academy, Manila, The Philippines; Hillcrest Christian School, Jos, Nigeria; Lithuania Christian

Academy, Klaipeda, Lithuania; Nicaraguan Christian Academy, Managua, Nicaragua; Quisqueya Christian School, Port au Prince, Haiti; Santiago Christian School, Santiago, Dominican Republic; and Sarospatak Academy, Sarospatak, Hungary. It should be noted that in some of these instances schools were established initially to provide Christian education for the children of missionaries though their outreach has now extended beyond that mission. We also take note of the work done by Worldwide Christian Schools, which partners with churches and other organizations to establish locally run Christian schools but does so with clear mission and evangelistic as well as educational intention. Synod should acknowledge this and give appropriate thanks to God for the visionary leadership of CRWM in developing a strong educational mission ministry around the world and for the many missionaries who have served our Lord and his church so well in diverse educational settings in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific and dedicate a time of prayer asking the Lord for increased opportunities for educational mission service, for missionaries to supply new posts, and for the financial resources to send them.

We also call the church's attention to an important mission development and the missiological discussion about it in the U.S. Center for World Missions journal, *Mission Frontiers* (25/2 [March-April 2003]), "The Scandal and Promise of Global Christian Education." Calvin College Provost Joel Carpenter ("The New Evangelical Universities: A Dynamic New Element in Mission Lands") takes note of the unexpected and exciting fact that among the mission churches outside of North America and Europe born in revivalist Christianity—especially Pentecostal and charismatic churches—there have arisen in recent years a significant number of institutions of Christian higher education beyond the training of church leaders. A great hunger exists in these emerging churches for a broader vision of Christian discipleship beyond soul saving alone. In the words of Stephen Noll, vice-chancellor of Uganda Christian University, "A new generation is seeking reality in their faith in the context of a revived and developing society" with a goal of nurturing leadership to develop "stable, godly nations" (p. 7). Among the foremost of these institutions is Daystar University of Nairobi, Kenya, a university that has developed close relationships with some North American Christian liberal arts colleges, including Wheaton and Calvin.

Beyond the *fact* of these new institutions of Christian higher learning in a global mission context, two writers in this journal issue insist upon Christian higher education as a *mission strategy* for the worldwide church. Educator Paul Scotchmer ("Christian Universities as a Mission Strategy: Recovering the Lost Vision") observes that nineteenth-century mission movements saw Christian higher education as a means of evangelization but that, for a variety of reasons, twentieth-century churches and mission boards dropped this strategy. He judges this to be a grave mistake, especially now in an age of globalization. "The real value of a Christian college lies in its unique ability to affirm the fundamental unity of all truth, in ways that serve the deepest needs of the human person." With the explosion of higher education, thanks to a "growing aspiration around the world for knowledge and skills that open the door [to] the meaningful participation in the global economy," it is imperative that the church help lead the way to instill humane values in the new global village. Noting that the church played a major role in increasing

the literacy levels of the developing world, Scotchmer asks: "Having done so much to prepare the soil for higher education in the developing world, the question before us today is whether the church is prepared to turn over the entire field, or most of it, to others" (p. 9).

Finally, missiologist Ralph Winter ("What's Wrong with 4,000 Pastoral Training Schools Worldwide?") reinforces the preceding by arguing that [evangelical] seminaries and Bible schools are not properly preparing the missionaries and church leaders that are needed to help the church grow around the world in the next century. Specifically, he indicts them for failing to be intellectually rigorous and thorough and for failing to be contextually sensitive to culture and language; in short for restricting their attention too much to Bible studies and not enough to broader liberal arts that are taught from a clear Christian worldview perspective. He observes:

Fifteen of every seventeen Evangelical students is totally untouched by any Christian grade school, high school, or college. At the very moment they study materials that have been secularized, whether American history or sociology or psychology or whatever, that is the time they need additional materials to round out and perhaps correct the picture. Furthermore, they cannot effectively study issues in secular books and only later find out the true picture. If this is the plight of those in the pew, it is all the more true of those who are diverted into alternative Bible Schools.

(*Mission Frontiers* [25/2 (March-April 2003)])

None of this is surprising or new to Reformed ears. What needs to be underscored here is that the push for integral Christian education at all levels, and especially at the college and university level, is being pleaded for *on missiological grounds* and by numerous educators and missionaries who are not necessarily from the Reformed tradition. This is a striking development and a good reminder to the Christian Reformed Church that its more than a century of strong commitment to Reformed Christian day school education at all levels is strategically important *also* for considered missiological reasons. A proper stewardship of our rich tradition demands of us a generous willingness to share it for the sake of the worldwide mission of the church and, when and where possible, to provide assistance and leadership both theologically and practically.

Therefore, CRC mission activity around the world also should be guided by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship with a view toward establishing solid families and communities and Christian day schools as well as worshiping congregations. This would mean that CRWM be encouraged to seek out allies and avenues in encouraging Christian higher education opportunities in its mission fields outside North America.

Finally, CRC members who are actively involved in Christian education should be encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists on the world scene by pursuing creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic in global contexts (e.g., teaching English as a second language).

D. Finances

CRC parents who choose Christian day schools for their children but cannot afford the total tuition have two means for help: (1) financial aid from the Christian school itself or (2) contributions from their church. In the first means, the school itself solicits funds and distributes them to help parents

meet their tuition obligation. In the second, the parents' church provides tuition assistance either through its benevolent fund or through a Christian education committee. In the first model, Christian schools most often receive revenue for their tuition assistance fund from one or more of these sources: private donations, supporting churches' collections, and proceeds from their school's foundation or endowment. Christian school societies in both the United States and Canada use this model, with the total amount available each year being only a minuscule percentage of the operating budget, usually under one percent.

In distribution, the majority of the money available goes to parents who are not members of supporting churches to the Christian school. The number of families who benefit is few. Most schools set a limit of paying no more than half of the tuition charge. Almost all schools use the finance committee of the board and its senior staff person to make decisions regarding a single means of determining need and /or some form of an application for aid. To ascertain need, more and more schools use an objective service rather than their own knowledge of need.

In the second model, churches receive donations and provide tuition assistance to its members' children either on the basis of need or a grant-in-aid regardless of need. For both bases, the church establishes in its budget the amount it expects to receive to match the expected expense. If the church distributes aid based on financial need, usually the deacons or an education committee has the parents who are seeking aid fill out an application and submit to an interview; the interview may even include submission of tax forms.

There are interesting instances of churches and Christian schools working together to decide financial aid for parents who have significant need. For example, two CRC churches in the Midwest cooperate with the local Christian school in interviewing parents. A deacon from the church and a Christian school board member meet with applying parents, hear the same answers to questions, and then make a joint recommendation on need to both the church committee and the school committee for appropriating any aid at all, the total amount of the aid, and which part of that amount each institution will supply. In over a hundred CRC churches, the church has adopted what has been called the Covenant Giving Plan in which the church pays the entire tuition amount for all families in the church who desire Christian day school for their children.

These models help CRC congregations to carry out the decision of Synod 2003 that CRC church councils should "develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 626). Synod 2003 also decided to "encourage CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to assist students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity, special needs)" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 627). Two examples will illustrate how this might be done.

In one instance, a group of Christian school-supporting families, tuition-aided by their CRC congregation, left the congregation to begin a CRC home missions' church. A private Christian foundation offered to supply the same tuition aid to the departing families as they received in their former congregation for the first year, a lesser amount the second year, and none at all by the

fourth year, with all agreeing by that time that the new church could provide its own aid.

Another means of a group of churches working together is through their classis. Classis Grand Rapids East in May 2004, after discussing a thorough analysis of Christian school participation and tuition costs for children in every church in the classis, “agreed to establish a committee to develop a proposal for a program and fund for providing financial assistance to congregations facing unusually difficult financial situations relative to Christian School tuition” (Minutes of Classis Grand Rapids East, 12.4). This action is one way for whole communities of churches to remove a financial barrier to full access to Christian education for churches with many children but with very limited financial resources.

VIII. A vision for the future

In sections IV and V of our report, we considered the biblical-theological reasons why the CRC has historically as a denomination strongly supported Christian day school education. Consistently, as CRC synods wrestled with this question, the church followed the lead of the Dordt-based church order (now Church Order Article 71) and appealed to the responsibilities of both parents and community as grounded in the biblical reality of the covenant. The baptismal vow, so CRC synods affirmed and reaffirmed, places upon parents and the congregation a sacred obligation to bring up the church’s children according to the demands of the covenant. In recent years, the congregation has also customarily taken a public vow to do so; it is CRC conviction and practice that the entire church community has a covenantal stake in and obligation to Christian day school education.

Thanks to the influence of Abraham Kuyper and Dutch Neo-Calvinism on the CRC, Christian education received an additional theological ground—the kingdom of God. Because Christ is Lord over the entire cosmos, and formal education is necessary preparation for a life of discipleship in God’s world, Christ must also be Lord of the school. This emphasis on the kingdom of God also influences the content of Christian day school education. As the 1955 report stated: “no area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and his Christ for the covenant child” (*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199).

We also observed that though covenant and kingdom remain essential pillars for grounding Christian day school education, they are no longer sufficient. Without betraying its covenantal and royal kingdom vision, the CRC has also been challenged to reach out beyond itself to the lost of our world and in so doing stretch itself to become more diverse. Consequently, so we contended in earlier sections of this report, *evangelism* or *mission* should be a third theological ground for the CRC as a denomination that supports Christian day school education. No less than our baptismal vow of commitment to the children of our church family, Christian education is also an integral part of the evangelistic and discipling ministry of a church that is committed to the Reformed faith.

We concluded by suggesting that an eschatological emphasis on the grand narrative of salvation history, on God’s redemptive plan to renew all things in Christ, brings all three themes together. The task of a Reformed Christian day school is to nurture children in a Reformed Christian worldview so that they can be active participants in and contributors to the plot of God’s providential

narrative. To state that in different words: The task of a Christian day school is to equip students for their roles as citizens of God's kingdom. Hence, we judge this conclusion to be obvious: Christian day school education is an essential ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

In addition to providing biblical-theological reasons for this conclusion, we have also shown that this denominational commitment to Christian education is not a radically new idea. Practically from the beginning of its now nearly one-hundred-and-fifty-year history, CRC synods have repeatedly and consistently been ardent proponents and supporters of Christian day schools. However, during the course of that history, the burden of financing these schools and this education has increasingly moved away from church support to parental tuition. Now, we propose returning to the earlier pattern; though we recognize that we must do so in a way that meets the needs of our far-different age. While the matter of financing is no small matter today, considering the growing costs of Christian day school education, we wish to emphasize that finances are not the first and primary reason for returning to the older vision of active church support. The fundamental reason is a biblical-confessional one. Christian day school education is an essential component of our Reformed witness. For the CRC to be true to its Reformed vision of discipleship in our complex and sometimes hostile world, it will need leaders who are committed to this vision and skilled in its implementation in the many areas and various vocations of our modern world.

In support of this perspective, we once again call the church and synod's attention to the CRC's Vision and Mission Statement, approved by Synod 1997 (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630). Under the rubric of Kingdom Extension, synod adopted the following goal:

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earthkeeping, racial relationships etc.).

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 61)

This goal flows from a thoroughly Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship; "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'" (Abraham Kuyper). It seems clear to our committee that it is impossible to achieve such a goal without a significant role for Christian day school education. It seems to us an impossible task without them. So then, there are sound and compelling biblical-theological reasons, a well-established historical precedent, and a current commitment to a Reformed vision of discipleship that support the idea of active church (i.e., denominational and congregational) support for Christian day school education. (As an aside, we also note that with the growing secularization and deterioration of public schools, a close identification with Christian education may be a drawing card for evangelism and church growth, especially in our efforts to demonstrate solidarity with the poor and promote diversity. At the very least, it provides golden opportunities for clear testimony to the character and heart of Reformed Christianity.)

How would such a commitment work out in practice? The implications of a covenantal, communal commitment to Christian education directly involve matters of Christian stewardship. If the nurture of our children is a common concern, then financial support should also be a common concern. This is

particularly true for families with lower incomes and for whom the growing cost of Christian school tuition is burdensome. It seems to us that a common concern is also a matter of common support, a matter of community stewardship. This is not a new idea; most CRC churches that are closely linked to community Christian schools already have some form of church support for those who need assistance in paying tuition for their children. Such assistance ranges from considering it as a matter of diaconal benevolence to commitments on the part of the church to the school that promise full tuition payment for all the congregation's children in Christian schools.

There are two problematic issues with a system of only providing diaconal support. First, treating community support for Christian education as a matter of benevolence is potentially demeaning—it amounts to asking for a handout. We contend that our confessional and historical practice as a denomination implies that community support for Christian day school is a matter of stewardship and not a matter of benevolence. Communal obligation is not a matter of charity but a matter of financial commitment by the entire body. The other problem is the lack of consistency among our churches that results in considerable confusion, especially, but not only, with respect to the tax laws of both Canada and the United States. Hence, we propose the outlines of a model plan that can be used by all congregations and is sufficiently flexible to meet the individual needs of specific congregations.

Beginning with the fundamental principle that the Christian education of a congregation is a common responsibility and thus a matter of stewardship, we propose that support for Christian day schools become a part of every congregation's annual budget. We do not recommend a particular plan because churches need flexibility to develop plans that take into account their local circumstances and the legal and tax situations that apply to them. Churches can choose to support an amount that reflects their local situation and circumstances in both church and school. Flexibility also means that a number of churches could create a common fund through a ministry shares type of plan to support members who send their children to Christian day schools.

As a church develops its plan, it should take the following steps:

1. The congregation should engage in a self-study, accompanied by a study of the biblical requirements of covenant responsibility as well as stewardship. Only if a congregation is clearly committed to sharing the cost of Christian education should a church continue with subsequent steps.
2. On the basis of stewardship discussions and presuming a clear commitment, develop a specific plan and decide at what level the congregation will support Christian day school education (e.g., 100 percent, 80 percent, 50 percent, 25 percent, 10 percent), and place it on the church's general budget. This report and its appendixes can serve as a guide for the church's use. In addition, congregations should seek professional legal and tax-accounting advice when drafting their plans.
3. The church issues charitable receipts to all its members based on each person's *total* contribution (i.e., no separation of the funds for Christian education).

The legal and tax situations in the United States and Canada are different, with more flexibility in the United States. Some churches have used a covenant

plan whereby the church pays up to 100 percent of the tuition for children of the congregation. The church is legally able to provide a full receipt for contributions to the church if the plan is in compliance with IRS ruling 83-104. The plan must be structured in such a way that there is no existence of *quid pro quo*. Appendix C contains a report from Deloitte and Touche that describes the features of such a plan.

IX. Recommendations

Note: (1) Recommendations relating to this report that were adopted by Synod 2003 can be found in the *Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 619-20, 626, 627-30. (2) The parenthetical reference after each recommendation indicates the relevant section of the report where extended discussion of the issue can be found.

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dan Vander Ark, chair, and John Bolt, reporter.

B. That synod declare that the purpose of all Christian education, in the home, in the church, and in the school, is to tell the story of God, his people, and his world, with the goal that children become active participants in that story and accept as their own the mission of God's people in his world (section III).

C. That synod advise the members and churches of the CRC to consider the responsibilities they bear for Christian education and for doing evangelism as equally important and complementary and declare that support for Christian education should never be used to undermine the work of evangelism and that evangelistic outreach should never be given as a ground for failing to support Christian day school education (sections III, IV).

Grounds:

1. Both tasks flow from a Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship rooted in the covenant and kingdom of God as well as the mission of God's people in the world.
2. Both tasks are callings placed before the CRC, its congregations, and through its officebearers to its members by the Church Order Articles 71, and 73-77.
3. Consideration of this dual calling and recognition of the diversity of gifts and interests of Christian believers are the essential first steps in diffusing potential tension and conflict in congregations regarding Christian education.

D. That synod give thanks to God for bringing the CRC *anno domini* 2005 to new circumstances of greater diversity thanks to new churches and members and declare this to be a wonderful opportunity to bear witness to the Reformed vision of an integral Christian education wherever it takes place—in the home, school, or church. That synod also urge all the members and churches of the CRC to give leadership to the many other Christians who are increasingly opting for some kind of Christian education (section IV, A, 4).

E. That synod encourage all the member churches of the CRCNA to commit themselves in the church calendar year 2005-2006 to study, reflection, and self-examination as to the Reformed identity of their faith and practice as individual

believers and as congregations. Use of denominational statements and study guides available from CRC Publications is recommended (section VII, C).

Grounds:

1. The occasion of significant discussion about Christian education is a great opportunity to consider the meaning of our Reformed identity and the nature of a Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship in our world.
2. Our Reformed confessional heritage is a gift from God, and we are called to be good stewards of the Reformed biblical worldview of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation, which is a needed message in our religiously confused times.
3. There are concerns in the CRCNA about the strength of our Reformed identity, our understanding of it, and our commitment to it.

F. That synod urge all parents, as they face an increasing number of options for educating their children, to examine carefully and prayerfully whether the schools they are considering are in harmony with the Reformed Christian vision of life where the lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation is clearly taught (section VI, A, 2).

Ground: This consistent vision of Christian education is set forth in Church Order Article 71.

G. That synod urge parents whose children attend Reformed Christian day schools, and CRC members who support these schools, to stay informed and be vigilant in helping such schools retain their Reformed identity and character (section VI, A, 1).

Ground: This consistent vision of Christian education is set forth in Church Order Article 71.

H. That synod urge parents whose children attend Christian day schools and CRC members who support these schools, to stay informed and be vigilant in helping their schools be truly inclusive communities where diversity does not create unnecessary barriers to any student's full involvement in the life of the school (section VI, B, 1, 2, 6).

Ground: This is a mandate of the gospel (James 2) and an implication of the CRC's commitment to becoming a more diverse community.

I. That synod request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to assist all CRC agencies in the implementation of the denominational strategy of including "Christian day school education in a full-orbed CRCNA mission program" (BOT Minute 2592, 3) (section VI, A, 5).

Grounds:

1. Reformed Christian day school education is important for equipping a leadership for the CRC that is committed to the Reformed faith.
2. In view of the growing secularization of public schools, the Reformed tradition's long practice of good Christian education is an integral part of our Reformed kingdom witness and mission to our fellow citizens. This is one of our distinctive contributions to the growth of God's kingdom in North America

3. There is a growing awareness among evangelicals in mission work globally that evangelism and missions in our world are incomplete without distinctly Christian education at all levels. (See the theme issue of *Mission Frontiers* [25/2, March April 2003]: “The Scandal and Promise of Global Christian Education.”)
- J. That synod provide the following advice to small churches with respect to Church Order Article 71 and Christian day school education (section VII, B):
1. That councils of small churches continue to encourage preaching that is consistent with the Reformed world-and-life view and that recognizes and promotes Christ’s lordship over all areas of life as articulated in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.
 2. That councils of small churches urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with the Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation. Where possible, councils shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools.
 3. That councils encourage parents who need to supplement the day school education with faith-based materials, or parents who homeschool, to consider publications from organizations that produce excellent curricular materials that support the Reformed vision of Christian education such as Christian Schools International (CSI), Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC), Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS), or Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS).
 4. That churches be encouraged to intentionally use Faith Alive Publications’ curriculum and materials based on a Reformed vision for as many of its youth and adult educational programs as possible.
 5. That churches encourage their youth to attend Reformed Christian colleges and universities by way of scholarships, campus visits, and other ways. (See Recommendation 14, *Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 629.)
 6. That those responsible for adult education in the churches promote the Reformed vision of Christian education by (1) encouraging the discussion of books and articles supporting this vision, (2) inviting speakers who are insightful advocates of Christian education to lead workshops, and (3) including materials on Christian education in their libraries
- K. That synod request CRC Publications (if possible, in cooperation with CRC Home Missions and Christian school organizations) to investigate the prospect of producing a curriculum to be used by churches, Christian parents, or youth leaders to help integrate faith and learning.
- Ground:* This would help to ensure that the “Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation” (Church Order Art. 71) could be more clearly taught to the youth and more clearly understood by all involved in giving leadership to the youth of the church.
- L. That synod instruct Denominational Services to develop a best-practices resource file for small churches, enabling the sharing of insights and programs that creatively implement the intentions of Article 71 (section VII, B).

M. That synod declare the following statements to be the Christian Reformed Church's understanding of the relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church's work of doing evangelism in North America (section VII, C, 1):

1. The very presence of Reformed Christian day schools in our increasingly secular public square is itself an evangelistic witness, a testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ; their existence is to be celebrated and their mission to be encouraged.
2. Institutionally, Christian day school education is not the responsibility of the official church. In mission situations, especially in cases of great need, it may be necessary for the church to engage in such activities as education (and medical care) as part of its larger diaconal ministry. Such activity should be ad hoc and temporary in nature and should strive toward indigenous ownership and governance.
3. CRC mission activity in North America is to be guided by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship with a view toward establishing solid families and communities and Christian day schools as well as worshiping congregations.

Ground: This is in keeping with the BOT's denominational strategy statement.

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earthkeeping, racial relationships etc.).

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 61)

4. CRC members who are actively involved in Christian education are encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists in a threefold sense:
 - a. In their personal lives and conduct as teachers to demonstrate their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and use all appropriate means to nurture the faith and spiritual development of their students.
 - b. To pursue their vocations as a means of testifying to the lordship of Jesus Christ and in that way bear witness to the world.
 - c. To pursue creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic, either in specific mission situations (e.g., teaching English as a second language) or by encouraging the schools in which they work to be creative in reaching out to the lost with the good news of the gospel.

N. That synod declare the following statements to be the Christian Reformed Church's understanding of the relationship between our commitment to Reformed colleges and universities and the church's work of doing evangelism in North America (section VII, C, 2):

1. The very presence of Reformed colleges and universities in our increasingly secular public square is itself an evangelistic witness, a testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ; their existence is to be celebrated and their mission and work encouraged.

2. Reformed colleges and universities are encouraged to see themselves as being in a global mission context and are urged to guide their work by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship in which academic concerns do not overshadow the spiritual and evangelistic components of the educator's task.
3. CRC members who are actively involved in teaching at the college and university level are encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists in a threefold sense:
 - a. In their personal lives and conduct as teachers to demonstrate their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and use all appropriate means to nurture the faith and spiritual development of their students.
 - b. To pursue their vocations as a means of testifying to the lordship of Jesus Christ and in that way bear witness to the world.
 - c. To pursue creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic, either in specific mission situations (eg., teaching English as a second language), or, in the case of those teaching at our Reformed colleges and universities, by encouraging the schools in which they work to be creative in reaching out to the lost with the good news of the gospel.

O. That synod declare the following statements to be the Christian Reformed Church's understanding of the relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church's work of world missions (section VII, C, 3):

1. Although establishing Christian day schools is not, in the first place, the task of the official church, in mission situations, especially in cases of great need, it may be necessary for the church to engage in such activities as education (and medical care) as part of its larger diaconal ministry. Such activity should be ad hoc and temporary in nature and should strive toward indigenous ownership and governance.
2. CRC mission activity around the world is to be guided by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship with a view toward establishing solid families and communities and Christian day school as well as worshipping congregations.

Ground: This is in keeping with the BOT's denominational strategy statement.

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earthkeeping, racial relationships etc.).

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 61)

3. That CRWM be encouraged to seek out allies and avenues in encouraging Christian higher education opportunities in its mission fields outside North America.

Grounds:

- a. This is consistent with, and a complement to Recommendation O, 2 above.

- b. From the strength of our theology and practice, the CRC has a golden opportunity today to provide needed assistance to and leadership for the global church and its mission work around the world.
- 4. CRC members who are actively involved in Christian education are encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists on the world scene by pursuing creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic in global contexts (e.g., teaching English as a second language).

P. That synod give thanks to God for the visionary leadership of CRWM in developing a strong educational mission ministry around the world; for the many missionaries who have served our Lord and his church so well in diverse educational settings in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific; and dedicate a time of prayer asking the Lord for increased opportunities for educational mission service, for missionaries to supply new posts, and for the financial resources to send them (section VII, C, 3).

Q. That synod encourage all its member churches to develop goals, strategies, and processes toward the healthy resolution of differences and conflicts (section VII, A).

Grounds:

1. The changes and cultural pressures underscored in this report make it clear that building authentic community needs to be a high priority for the church at this point in its history.
2. Christ's high priestly prayer makes it clear that disunity in the church undermines the gospel message (John 17:20-23).

R. That synod instruct the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee to include a specific unit (module) of instruction regarding the CRC's position on Christian day school education for all candidates to CRC ministry. This report could serve as part of the required reading for ministry candidates (section VII, C, 2).

S. That synod commend this report to the churches for study and discussion.

T. That synod declare the work of the committee completed and dismiss the committee.

Committee to Study Christian
Day School Education

John Bolt, reporter
David Engelhard, ex officio
Karen Gerritsma
James Jones
Herman Proper
Sherry Ten Clay
Ildefonso Torres
Dan Vander Ark, chair
Marion Van Soelen
John Visser

Appendix A

Council Survey

Survey Process

All *councils* of organized and emerging churches were invited to return a completed questionnaire. The General Secretary's office managed the mailing of the survey. A cover letter, together with the questionnaire, was sent to the "Clerk of Council." Six hundred fifty-five church councils are represented by their returned questionnaire in this survey of 989 churches; the return rate is 66%. First mailing of the questionnaire went out in January, and a second mailing to nonresponding councils was sent in February. April 10, 2002, was the date the last questionnaire was received and included in the data set. All 47 classes are represented among the returned questionnaires.

Note: In many cases, the data presented reflect only the personal estimates or perceptions of the people completing the survey.

Results

The tables of this report are based on the 655 returned questionnaires. Tables are named by the questions as they appear in the questionnaire. Results of each question are summarized in the order they appear in the questionnaire. Percentages are usually taken from the "valid percent" column of the tables. Median average is the estimated value at which 50% of the churches fall below and 50% above (the "cumulative percent" column can be used to find the median category in which the median value falls). Median average was used in this report except in Q.1-Q.4 where the mean average was considered to be more accurate.

In an attempt to be as accurate as possible, the results in Q.1-Q.4 below have been adjusted to reflect the fact that: (1) different churches have different numbers of school-aged children, and (2) the size distribution of churches that returned questionnaires was slightly different from the size distribution of churches in the denomination.

School Information

Q.1. The mean average number of school-age children (K-12) per congregation is 61. Only 2% or 20 congregations report having no school-age children.

Q.2. What percentage of these school-age children attends a Christian day school? The mean average among the churches is 60% (59% in the U.S. and 62% in Canada). Eleven percent of the churches report no children in Christian day schools.

Q.3. Council representatives were asked to estimate the percentage of school-aged children attending Christian schools fifteen years ago. Obviously this estimate is subject to error from several sources, including the knowledge of the respondent, the possibility that some churches are less than fifteen years old, and changes in the size and number of children in the churches. Nevertheless, if 15% of the churches that didn't exist fifteen years ago are dropped from our sample, and it is assumed that the number of school-aged children in each of the remaining churches remained more-or-less the same over this period, the mean average percentage estimate of school-aged children in Christian schools fifteen years ago is 67% (68% in the United States and 65% in Canada). Comparing these percentages with those in Q.2 gives an *estimated* drop of 9 percentage points in the United States and 3 percentage points in Canada.

Q.4. Of the children attending Christian day schools, what percentage is attending Reformed, Christian schools? The mean average is 78%. Therefore, 47% of school-aged children attend Reformed Christian schools (78% of the 60% who attend Christian day schools). Thirty-one percent of the churches report no children attending Reformed Christian day schools.

Q.5. The median average number of school-age children in each church who are being homeschooled is 2. There were no homeschooled children in 47% of the churches. Among the 53% of the churches who report children being homeschooled, the median average number is 10 or less.

Q.6 & Q.6a. Ninety-seven percent of the churches are in locations where a Christian day school is available (although we did not ask specifically about what grade levels were available). Seventy-eight percent of the churches are near a Reformed, Christian school.

Promoting Christian Day Schools

Q.7a-e. Who in the churches takes primary responsibility for promoting Christian schools? The most common answer is that this responsibility is not defined in the church (39%). Among other possible answers, the next most common is council (28% say this), then pastor(s) (12%), followed by Christian school finance committee (9%) and the education or Christian education committee (7%). Eleven percent of the churches report some “other” person or group takes on this responsibility.

Q.8a-e. Financial support (74%) is the most commonly used method by churches to promote the local Christian school(s). Next is distribution of school literature (53%), then preaching (45%) and personal visits (19%). Fourteen percent of the churches say certain other methods are used as well.

Q.9. Are officebearers or staff (e.g., pastor, elder, deacon) expected to send their children to Christian day schools? Seventy-five percent of the churches say no; 25% say yes.

Q.10a. Seventy-seven percent of the churches say (strongly agree or agree) that their councils diligently encourage parents to have their children instructed in Christian day schools.

Q.10b. Ninety-four percent of the churches say they have a good working relationship with the local Christian day school(s).

Q.10c. Seventy-one percent of the churches say their congregations are united in their support of Christian day schools.

Q.10d. Seventy-six percent say their classis responsibly inquires of them whether or not they diligently promote the cause of Christian education at all levels.

Q.10e. Eighty-seven percent of the churches say ethnic minority members of their church feel comfortable attending Christian day school. Fifty-one percent of the churches say this situation doesn’t apply to them.

Q.10f. Seventy-nine percent of them report that their pastor(s) strongly supports Christian education from the pulpit through prayer and preaching.

Q.10g. Seventy-three percent say their elders strongly support Christian education through prayer, conversation, and family visiting.

Q.10h. Sixty-three percent of the churches disagree that baptism vows by parents requires them to provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.10i. Sixty-three percent of them disagree that baptism vows by the congregation require the church to provide financial assistance so that parents can provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.10j. Seventy-five percent say their church encourages its young people to attend a Christian college.

Financial Support of Christian Day Schools

Q.11. What percentage of families that send their children to Christian day schools receives financial support from their church? Among 39% of the churches, none of the families receive financial support, and among 33%, less than 25% of the families do. The median average among all reporting churches is 8% of the families receive financial support.

Q.12a-e. How is financial need determined by those churches giving financial assistance? In response to this question, 29% of the churches say they do not provide financial support. Among the churches, the most commonly used method is determining need by reviewing the family’s financial records (36%), followed by giving whatever a family requests (12%), then giving the same amount to everyone (9%) and providing full tuition cost (6%). Twenty-five percent of the churches wrote in “other” methods used to determine financial need.

Q.13a-e. What means for raising monies have been used by the churches? The most commonly used method is offerings (60%), followed by general budget (16%), then pledge giving (13%), and the Covenant Giving Plan (a.k.a. the Kuyper’s Plan or the Milwaukee Plan) (9%). Eighteen percent wrote in “other” methods used to raise monies.

Q.14 & Q.14a. What is the average tuition per child of the local Christian school(s)? In the United States, median average tuition per child by school level is as follows: elementary school, \$3,787; middle school, \$4,101; and high school, \$4,685. In Canada, median average tuition per child is: elementary school, \$6,023; middle school, \$5,000 (note: in many locations in Canada, Christian schools charge a per-family tuition and there is no middle school but K-8 is combined); and high school, \$6,461.

Q.15a-e. What reason do parents most often give for not sending their children to Christian schools? The most common reason is cost of tuition (71%). The next most common reason is wanting to be a witness in public school (16%), followed by too far to travel (12%) and lack of cultural/ethnic sensitivity (3%). Twenty-one percent supplied "other" reasons.

Q.16. How has the church benefited from the Christian day school(s)? Two benefits were requested. Sixty-five percent of the churches wrote in two or more benefits, 19% wrote in one, and 17% checked that their church has received no benefits.

Supporting Christian Higher Education

Q.17. What percentage of college and university students from the churches attends a Reformed Christian institution of higher education? Median average is 23%. Thirteen percent of the churches say none attend.

Q.18. Twelve percent of the churches say they provide financial support for Christian college tuition. *Note:* Some checked yes and wrote in "indirectly, through ministry shares."

Q.19. How has the church benefited from Reformed Christian colleges? Two benefits were requested. Fifty-three percent of the churches wrote in two or more benefits, 29% wrote in one, and 19% checked that their church has received no benefits.

About the Responding Churches

Q.20. Who are the people who completed the questionnaire? By position, the largest percentage of the questionnaires was completed by the clerk or assistant clerk (46%) of the church council. Next most common position is minister/pastor, other minister/pastor/professional staff, evangelist, or church planter/missionary pastor (18% combined). (Note: there is some overlap of respondents to the council and pastor surveys. We can still conclude, nevertheless, that the two surveys express the voice of different populations.) Eight percent of respondents to the council survey are elders or chairs of the elders (team); 5% are presidents, vice presidents, or chairs of council; 5% are administrative assistants, office administrators, secretaries, or financial assistants; and 3% are deacons or chairs/secretaries of deacons. One percent is completed by councils. Fourteen percent are completed by others.

Q.21. What is the country of location of the churches? Seventy-four percent are located in the United States and 26% in Canada.

Q.22. What is the average yearly income of member households in the churches? Median average in the United States is \$44,074 and in Canada \$47,173 (for these estimates, responses to Q.22 were sorted by nation).

Q.23. What is the type of area in which the churches are located? Twenty percent of the churches are located in a large city (750,000 or more population) or its suburbs, 19% in a medium-sized city (150,000-749,000 population) or its suburbs, 14% in a small city (50,000-149,000), 12% in a large town (10,000-49,000), 24% in a small town (less than 10,000), and 10% in open country and/or farming area.

Appendix B

Pastor Survey

Survey Process

All *active pastors* were invited to return a completed questionnaire. The general secretary's office managed the mailing of the survey. A cover letter, together with the questionnaire, was sent to each pastor. Four hundred ninety-three pastors are represented by their returned questionnaire in this survey of 864 active pastors; the return rate is 57%. The first and only mailing of the questionnaire went out in January. April 10, 2002, was the date the last questionnaire was received and included in the data set. All 47 classes are represented among the returned questionnaires.

Note: The data presented reflect the personal estimates or perceptions of the pastor completing the survey.

Results

The tables of this report are based on the 493 returned questionnaires. Tables are named by the questions as they appear in the questionnaire. Results of each question are summarized in the order they appear in the questionnaire. Percentages are usually taken from the "valid percent" column of the tables. Median average is the estimated value at which 50% of the pastors fall below and 50% above (the "cumulative percent" column can be used to find the median category in which the median value falls).

School Information

Q.1. How many school age children (K-12) do pastors have at home? Forty-seven percent say they have no school age children at home. Median average number of school age children at home for all pastors is less than one (0.3, if you can imagine this). Among the 53% who say they have school age children at home, the median average number is 1.7 children.

Q.2. Do pastors send their school age children to Christian day schools? Forty-six percent say they have no school age children at home. Forty-five percent say yes and 10% say no (two saying because there is no Christian school for them and one saying because they home-school). Among only those pastors with school age children, 82% send their children to Christian day schools and 18% do not.

Q.3. In past years, did the pastors send their school age children to Christian day schools? Thirteen percent say they had no school age children at home then. Eighty-one percent say yes they did and 6% say no. Among only those pastors who had school age children then, 94% say they sent their children then and 6% say no they did not.

Q.4. Sixty-three percent of the pastors say their church expects them to send their children to Christian day schools and 34% say they do not expect them. About 2% say not sure or something like "yes and no; some do and some don't."

Q.5. Do churches have policies to provide its pastors with special compensation assistance so that their children can attend Christian day schools? Sixteen percent report yes, 83% no, and 1% not sure.

Promoting Christian Day Schools

Q.6a-e. Who in the pastors' churches takes primary responsibility for promoting Christian schools? The most common answer is that this responsibility is not defined in the church (44%). Among other possible answers, the next most common is pastor(s) (20% say this), then council (19%), followed by Christian school finance committee (15%) and the education or Christian education committee (2%). Eleven percent of the pastors report some "other" person or group takes on this responsibility.

Q.7. Responding to this open-ended question, pastors describe in their own words what they do to nurture and maintain a good working relationship with their local Christian day schools. Ninety-three percent describe their activities; the comments of 7% seem to indicate no activity.

Q.8. What issues regarding Christian day schools affect the way pastors preach about and/or promote them in their congregations? Responding to this open-ended question, 92% give comments that seem to identify the issues, and the comments of 8% seem to indicate there are no issues.

Q.9a. Eighty-one percent of the pastors say (strongly agree or agree) they diligently encourage parents to have their children instructed in Christian day schools.

Q.9b. Ninety-four percent of the pastors say they have a good working relationship with the local Christian day school(s).

Q.9c. Sixty-three percent of the pastors say their congregations are united in their support of Christian day schools.

Q.9d. Fifty-eight percent say their classis responsibly inquires of their churches whether they diligently promoted the cause of Christian education at all levels.

Q.9e. Sixty-eight percent of the pastors say ethnic minority members of their church feel comfortable attending Christian day school. Forty-six percent of the pastors say this situation doesn't apply to their church.

Q.9f. Sixty-nine percent of the pastors report that they strongly support Christian education from the pulpit through prayer and preaching.

Q.9g. Fifty-seven percent say their elders strongly support Christian education through prayer, conversation, and family visiting.

Q.9h. Sixty-nine percent of the pastors disagree that baptism vows by parents requires them to provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.9i. Forty-six percent of them disagree that baptism vows by the congregation require the church to provide financial assistance so that parents can provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.9j. Ninety-five percent say they encourage the church's young people to attend a Christian college.

Q.10. In supporting and promoting Christian day schools in their congregations, what arguments and reasons do pastors use, in preaching and teaching, to convince parents of the importance of sending their children to Christian day schools? Ninety-two percent of the pastors give reasons and 8% do not in their written comments.

Q.10a. If they do not support or promote Christian day schools in their congregations, what arguments and reasons have convinced the pastors of this position? This does not apply to 65% of the pastors. Among the pastors who wrote comments, 98% seem to include reasons and 2% do not.

Q.11a-e. What reason do parents most often give for not sending their children to Christian schools? The most common reason is cost of tuition (70%). Next most common reason is wanting to be a witness in public school (25%), followed by too far to travel (9%) and lack of cultural/ethnic sensitivity (7%). Twenty-eight percent supplied "other" reasons.

Q.12. How has the church benefited from the Christian day school(s)? Two benefits were requested. Seventy-two percent of the pastors wrote in two or more benefits, 17% wrote in one, and 11% checked that their church has received no benefits.

Supporting Christian Higher Education

Q.13a-e. What means do pastors use to encourage the young people of their church to attend a Christian college? Eleven percent say they do not encourage them to attend. The most common mean that pastors use is working with their youth group (46%), followed by doing career counseling (18%), then bringing in college representatives (11%) and writing letters to young people (7%). Fifty-four percent give other means, such as one-on-one informal meetings.

Q.14. What percentage of college and university students from the churches attends a Reformed Christian institution of higher education? Median average is 33%. Nine percent of the pastors say none attend from their church.

Q.15. How has the church benefited from Reformed Christian colleges? Two benefits were requested. Sixty-six percent of the pastors wrote in two or more benefits, 21% wrote in one, and 12% checked that their church has received no benefits.

About the Responding Pastors

Q.16a-e. What schools have the pastors attended? Seventy-seven percent say they attended a Christian elementary school, 61% attended a Christian middle school, 63% a Christian high school, 92% a Christian college, and 99% a seminary. Less than 1% had attended none of them.

Q.17. Who are the people who completed the questionnaire? By position, the largest percentage of the questionnaires was completed by a lead, sole, or senior minister/pastor (88%).

Q.18. What is the country of location of the pastors' congregation? Seventy-six percent are located in the United States and 24% in Canada.

Appendix C

Reports on Educational Funding Plans for the CRC in the United States and Canada by Deloitte & Touche

What follows are the reports provided to our committee by the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche. Appendix C-1 is the Memorandum/Executive Summary (United States) provided to our committee on August 19, 2002; Appendix C-2 is the full, extended report as provided on April 1, 2002 (United States); Appendix C-3 is the report provided by Deloitte & Touche (Canada) to the committee on October 10, 2002.

Note: In addition to consulting these reports, each congregation should obtain professional legal and accounting advice in drawing up their plan.

Appendix C-1: Technical Memorandum/Executive Summary (United States)

Appendix C-2: Full Report (United States)

Appendix C-3: Report (Canada)

Appendix C-1

Technical Memorandum/Executive Summary (United States)

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Memo

**Deloitte
& Touche**

Date: August 19, 2002

To: The Files

From: Mary E. Rauschenberg
Scott L. Hirsch
Erica A. Lazzo

Subject: Chairitable Receipting Requirements for a Church Providing Direct Support of Members'
Children's Christian Education

This memorandum is a summary discussion and is limited to the described facts. It is not intended to be a formal opinion of tax consequences, and, thus, may not contain a full description of all the facts or a complete exposition and analysis of all relevant tax authorities. The conclusions and recommendations contained in this memorandum are based on our understanding of the facts, assumptions, information, and documents referenced herein and current tax laws and published tax authorities in effect as of the date of this memorandum, which are subject to change. If the facts and assumptions are incorrect or change or the tax laws change, the conclusions and recommendations would likewise be subject to change. Deloitte & Touche LLP assumes no obligation to update the memorandum for any future changes in tax law, regulations, or other interpretations and does not intend to do so. Unless otherwise specified, all section references are to the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 ("IRC") or the regulations thereunder, both as amended through the date of this memorandum.

This memorandum is not binding on the IRS or the courts and should not be considered a representation, warranty, or guarantee that the IRS or the courts will concur with our conclusions. Only the specific tax issues and tax consequences described herein are covered by this memorandum; no other federal, state, or local laws of any kind were considered and are beyond the scope of this memorandum.

FACTS

The Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") is a Protestant denomination of about 950 churches and 280,000 members in North America. One of the primary tenets of CRC theology is Christian education. Christian day schools, organized as separate legal entities from CRC churches, serve the CRC and other conservative Protestant denominations. However, control of the schools is often vested with CRC congregation members. Over the years, the CRC churches have maintained a close relationship with the Christian day schools. As part of this relationship, the CRC churches have provided financial assistance to the schools. This assistance includes Sunday collections and fundraisers that appeal to all members of the CRC congregations. However, the majority of the funding for CRC sponsored Christian day schools

Deloitte
Touche
Tohmatsu

comes from tuition. Some CRC churches pay the tuition for all members' children. Other CRC churches provide no tuition assistance to their members' children. The CRC has not adopted a uniform methodology for use by its churches in determining whether and/or how to fund the Christian education of their members' children.

Recently, the CRC Synod 2000 appointed a committee to study Christian day school education ("the Committee") whose purpose is to determine whether the denomination should reaffirm its theological support of Christian education (this was last done in the 1950's). It is our understanding that The Committee has concluded that the CRC ought to reaffirm this support. As part of its mandate, the Committee is developing a recommendation for the funding of the Christian education of CRC members' children that the individual congregations may adopt.

The CRC views the Christian education of youth as fundamental to its religious beliefs. At a child's baptism, the entire congregation makes an oral commitment to support the Christian education of that child. The Committee will recommend that the CRC churches assume responsibility for funding at least a portion of its members' children's education, to fulfill the congregation's obligation to support the Christian education of CRC youth. It will recommend that individual CRC churches pay part or all of the tuition for its members' children enrolled in the Christian day schools directly from its general operating budget. The funding of the tuition of the congregation's children will one of the programs the church sponsors each year. The churches will not solicit or require specific contributions from members with school age children. There will be no additional pressure to give placed on these members. Instead, the funding of the education of the congregation's children should be part of the church's general obligations, funded through operating budget, the same as other programs sponsored by the church. The CRC expects that its members will practice the principles of Christian stewardship. The principle is the belief that those who have been blessed with extraordinary resources are expected to donate not only more dollars to the church, but probably a higher percentage of their income than those who have less financial capacity. In other words, of those to whom much has been given, much is expected.

ISSUE

Assuming the CRC churches adopt the committee's recommendation, should the charitable receipts issued by the CRC churches include a quid pro quo for the value of the education subsidy provided to members' children?

CONCLUSION

If a CRC church adopts the committee's recommendation, the CRC church does not need to disclose quid pro quo in the charitable receipts issued to members who have no children receiving subsidized education. Additionally, the CRC church arguably should not need to disclose any quid pro quo in the charitable receipts issued to members whose children receive subsidized education. It is possible that based upon the facts of a given church, the IRS could question this treatment.

This conclusion was reached based upon certain key criteria being in existence and the lack of certain other key criteria as follows:

QUID PRO QUO ANALYSIS

FACTS AND ACTIONS INDICATE QUID PRO QUO DOES NOT EXIST	FACTS AND ACTIONS THAT WOULD INDICATE QUID PRO QUO EXISTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A congregation formally resolves that funding part or all of its member's children's tuition is an obligation of the church. This obligation is assumed as a general obligation of the church.• Payments of tuition to the Christian day schools are made from each CRC church's general operating funds. The school bills the church directly.• The portion of tuition subsidized by the church becomes a church liability. If the church is not able to pay, this liability does not revert to the parent.• Any portion of tuition not subsidized by the church is paid by the parent directly to the school.• Church member contributions are based upon each member's conscience and ability to pay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CRC churches solicit and/or require specific contributions from members with children in any way that is different from other members.• A church requests, orally or written, that the families with children in school give their tuition savings to the church.• A church creates a separate education fund for support of the Christian schools, and/or sets aside specific contributions from families with children in school that go directly to the school.• A church creates the expectation, whether documented or implicit, that its members with children are expected to contribute more money to the church than other members.• A church creates any documentation, promotional material, or correspondence that specifically allocates the cost of the school to only the members with children in the school.

DISCUSSION

The general rules for charitable contribution deductions are codified within Internal Revenue Code Section (IRC §)170. IRC §170(f)(8) requires that to be deductible, any contribution in excess of \$250 must be substantiated with a contemporaneous written acknowledgement from the donee organization. The acknowledgement must contain the following:

1. The amount of cash contributed or a description (but not value) of any property contributed;
2. A statement disclosing whether the donee organization provided any goods or services in exchange for the contributed money or property; and
3. A description and good faith estimate of the value of any goods or services provided in exchange for contributions, or a statement that the contributions were made in exchange for intangible religious benefit. Intangible religious benefit is defined as any intangible religious benefit that is provided by

an organization organized exclusively for religious purposes and which is generally not sold in a commercial transaction outside the donative context.

The acknowledgement must also be contemporaneous, which means that the acknowledgement must be received by the donor before the earlier of the due date of the donor's tax return or the date the donor files the tax return.

Thus, every member who makes a contribution greater than \$250 to a CRC Church is required to receive a receipt in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction on his or her individual tax return. In order to issue the receipt, the church must determine whether the member has received quid pro quo. In the case of CRC members with no children enrolled in Christian day schools, it would appear they receive no tuition benefit and, therefore, no quid pro quo. This conclusion is not as clear in the case of the members with children enrolled in the Christian day schools and whose tuition is subsidized by the church. Several cases and rulings over the past few decades have examined the issue of the deductibility of contributions to a church that funds education of the contributor's children. In other words, whether the tuition benefit was deemed to be quid pro quo. The cases and rulings are discussed below along with an analysis of their application to CRC's facts.

In *Haak vs. U.S.*¹, members of a Christian Reformed Church made payments to the church and deducted them as charitable contributions. The church then paid the taxpayer's children's tuition to a Christian day school. The IRS disallowed a portion of the taxpayer's contributions to the church as non-deductible tuition expenses. The District court upheld the IRS's position, stating that if a transfer is made with the expectation of receiving a benefit, and such benefit is received, that transfer is not a charitable contribution. In this case, the church engaged in specific actions that indicated that the taxpayers were making these contributions to the church in lieu of paying tuition. The church sent members "Guidelines for Contributions" twice a year. These "Guidelines" broke down the per-family costs to the church for various church expenses such as tuition, school building expense, etc. This cost was then broken into weekly contributions for each family. Additionally, four times per year, the Consistory sent church members a letter indicating the financial obligations assumed by the church for each family and what the family's contribution had been. The amounts of education cost varied for each family based on how many children were enrolled in the school. Families with no children in the school were not allocated any of this cost. Though no legal obligation existed between the families and the church, these communications between the church and the families led the court to conclude that the church expected the parents to fund the cost of their children's tuition. Likewise, it concluded that the parents had an expectation of receiving education for their children in exchange for the contributions.

The CRC's proposal expects all members to give what they can afford to support the church, without any extra burden or pressure borne by those families with children in school. The key factor behind the CRC's proposal is the entire congregation's support of Christian education for the children of the church, not the redirecting of the funds paid by families for the schooling of their children.

In *Fausner v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*,² the plaintiff, Donald W. Fausner, made payments to his church and claimed these as deductible charitable donations on his tax return. However, the checks were endorsed for deposit by the parochial school his children were attending. The IRS deemed these

¹ 451 F. Supp. 1087

² T.C. Memo 1971-277

payments tuition payments and the Tax Court agreed with the IRS's position. *Fausner* clearly does not apply to the CRC proposal. Under the CRC proposal, contributions by members are made directly to the general fund of the church. The church, as part of its ministry will fund some or all of its members' children's tuition to Christian day schools.

In *Winters v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*,³ the church had established a particular fund to support its related schools. From this fund it paid tuition for its members' children who attended Christian day school. The parents were encouraged to sign pledge cards indicating the amount of contribution they expected to make to the education fund. However, they were not required to contribute in order for the fund to pay their children's tuition. Tax Court disallowed the taxpayers charitable deduction and the Court of Appeals affirmed this decision.

The CRC recommendation is distinguishable from *Winters*. All payments to the schools will be made from the church's general fund. Parents will not be encouraged to give more than other congregation members. All congregation members will be encouraged to give as much as they can afford and their conscience dictates.

In *Dejong v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*,⁴ a tax-exempt corporation was organized solely to maintain a school in which students could obtain religious as well as general instruction. No tuition was charged, parents of the students were encouraged to contribute to the school. No written or oral agreements existed documenting the amounts that the parents would give. However, the parents and school had the mutual understanding that those families that could afford to contribute to the school would contribute at a minimum the cost of educating their children. Thus, the Tax Court ruled that the payments to the school were not deductible and the Appellate Court affirmed that decision. The recommendation is distinguishable from *Dejong*.

Revenue Ruling 83-104⁵ states the position of the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") regarding the deductibility of contributions made by parents who have children enrolled in private school. The revenue ruling holds that to be deductible, the payments must be made voluntarily and with no expectation of obtaining a corresponding benefit. It is very important that the contribution must not be made pursuant to a plan (express or implied) to convert nondeductible tuition expenses into charitable contributions, and that the receipt of the schooling benefits not be dependent on the making of the payment.

Revenue Ruling 83-104 explains six examples where the donee organization operates a private school that is an organization described in IRC §170. The donor is a parent of a child who attends the school and makes a contribution to the organization. The sixth example described is of a church that operates a school providing secular and religious education that is attended by children of parents who are members and nonmembers of the church. The church receives contributions from all its members, which are placed in its general operating fund and used to support all church activities. Most members of the church do not have children in the school and a major portion of the churches expenses (supported by the general fund) are attributable to its non-school functions. The church solicits contributions from church members with children in the school in the same manner as members without children in the school. No members with children in the school are asked to donate an amount equivalent to the cost of tuition or asked to sign a

³ 468 F.2d. 778

⁴ 309 F.2d 373

⁵ 1983-2 CB 46

pledge to secure future donations. Also, most contributors to the church were not parents of children enrolled in the school. The IRS concluded that the parent-member's contributions to the church were deductible because, among other factors, most contributors were not parents, and parent-members did not contribute more than other members did.

The CRC recommendation should follow the treatment in the sixth example from Revenue Ruling 83-104. The CRC is upholding one of the basic tenets of its denomination, the importance of the Christian education. The CRC congregations will fund Christian education consistent with each of the congregation's other programs. Additionally, it is expected that more established members of the congregation will donate more than the younger members, because of their typically stronger financial position. If this trend holds true, it strengthens the argument for similarity to Revenue Ruling 83-104.

Private Letter Ruling ("PLR") 9004030 clarified the issue of the deductibility of certain contributions to a church made by parents of students enrolled in a Christian day school. In this ruling, the practice of the church was to pay the tuition of all children of member families that are enrolled in its school. Many members of this church follow the practice of tithing or very generous giving. In this particular case, there was a considerable imbalance of donations in favor of families with children in the school. The church requested that families benefiting from this tuition support increase their contributions in the amount that they would otherwise pay as tuition. There was no formal arrangement between the church and the school. The school held the parents responsible for the tuition payments.

IRS stated in PLR 9004030, although no single factor is determinative, it took into consideration a combination of several of the following factors to indicate that a payment was not a charitable contribution:

- The absence of a significant tuition charge
- Substantial or unusual pressure to contribute applied to parents of children attending the school
- Contribution appeals made as part of the admissions or enrollment process
- The absence of contributions by people other than parents of children attending the school
- Other factors suggesting that a contribution policy has been created as a means of avoiding the characterization of payments as tuition

In the situation described in the PLR, parents were entirely relieved of paying tuition out of their own pockets. Parents were also aware that the church would be unable to continue paying tuition expenses without large contributions from the parents. The records of the church also show that the contributions of parents increased or decreased as the number of children enrolled in the school changed. The contributions of parents of students drop off significantly in the summer months when the school was not in session. IRS concluded one purpose of the plan was tax avoidance; enabling parents to deduct as charitable contributions their previously nondeductible tuition payments. The IRS identified these factors as the reasons the payments to the church should be characterized as non-deductible tuition payments than deductible charitable contributions.

The CRC recommendation is distinguishable from the PLR because each CRC congregation will assume the responsibility of increased giving to support the members' children's tuition to the Christian schools. The proposal calls for all members of the congregation to give what they can to the church to support all

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From: Mary E. Rauschenberg

Scott L. Hirsch

Erica A. Lazzo

Date: August 19, 2002

programs of the church. The churches will not suggest that the parents of students enrolled in the schools give more to the church while their children are in school. The CRC's focus on support of Christian education as a responsibility of the entire congregation differentiates it from PLR 9004030.

Mary E. Rauschenberg

Scott L. Hirsch

Erica A. Lazzo

Appendix C-2
Full Report (United States)

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

April 1, 2002

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Presented by:

Mary E. Rauschenberg
Scott L. Hirsch

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

1 Scope of project

We understand that one of the tenets of the Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") is the support of a Christian education for the children of its members. The CRC support of Christian education historically has been strong and remains so today. One way this support is demonstrated is through the support of Christian day schools. Concurrent with our project, the CRC Synod 2000 appointed a committee to study Christian day school education ("the Committee"). The Committee's mandate includes the study of the CRC's financial support for Christian day schooling.

As we understand it, there are currently a number of practices being used to support the day schools. These practices vary from a congregation sponsoring and funding tuition for children of members from special collections but no direct support of member's children's tuition to support of a member's child's tuition where there is a family need. There does not appear to be any single model that is used consistently by a majority of the Churches.

One of the goals of the Committee is to develop a recommended model for use by the CRC congregations that wish to fund Christian education for their congregation's children. The recommended model will provide an education funding that meshes well with and implements CRC doctrines.

Our role during the project included the following:

- Compiling background information regarding how other organizations (i.e. the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church) fund their elementary and secondary schools;
- Participating in visits to CRC sponsored schools to learn the background regarding current funding practices;
- Providing advice on tax and other business implications of the proposed model;
- Preparing a report with our recommendations to the Committee at the completion of the project; and
- Preparing a technical memorandum discussing the tax implications of the proposed funding model.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

2 Executive Summary

Throughout the CRC's history, it has supported Christian education for its youth through Christian day schools. Its strong belief in the importance of Christian education is one of the key factors that resulted of the formation of the CRC denomination in the mid-1800s. Even today, CRC congregations reaffirm their dedication to the Christian education of their children at the baptism of every child in a congregation, by orally committing to supporting the Christian education of that child. Beyond that, its church order says that the church will "diligently encourage" its members to establish and maintain good Christian schools and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools. Clearly, the CRC has included Christian education as a fundamental part of the church's ministry.

However, changes in the economics of sending children to Christian day school have forced the CRC to review its views regarding Christian education. Specifically, younger families are having difficulty with the financial burden of funding a Christian education for their children. Some of these families are choosing not to send their children to Christian schools or are even leaving the CRC denomination. The CRC must find a way to support its families with children while addressing the concerns of families without children and without causing significant cutbacks in other congregation programs.

To achieve these objectives, the Committee recommends that each CRC congregation fund a percentage of the Christian day school tuition for its member children as part of the general ministry of the church. The percentage will be determined by each congregation based upon the economics of the particular church and the level of need of its member families. By providing flexibility in the model, all CRC congregations can adopt some form of economic support for Christian education.

If the CRC adopts the Committee's proposal, the CRC churches should not need to treat the value of a child's education as quid pro quo for the children's parents. This conclusion is based upon very specific criteria that are discussed later in the report and the attached technical memorandum.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

3 Procedures

During November, December and January, we visited the following individuals and organizations:

- Mr. Ronald Holwerda – Lansing Christian School;
- Mr. Peter Boonstra – Illiana Christian High School;
- Mr. Scott Helming – Trinity Evangelical Church and School;
- Rev. Cal Hoogendorn – Bethel Christian Reformed Church;
- Mr. Wayne Schneider – Milwaukee Catholic Archdiocese;
- Mr. Bob Freymark – Lutheran Schools – Missouri Synod;
- Mr. Robert Buikema – Brookfield Christian School; and
- Mr. Clifford Buelow – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) College.

Our meetings focused on gathering the following information:

1. What are the denomination's core beliefs regarding education and schools?
2. How are the schools organized? What is their relationship with the associated church(es)?
3. Do the schools admit students from other denominations?
4. What are the primary sources of financial support for the school?
5. Does the school or denomination offer any financial aid or support to its students' families?

We gathered additional information relating to the CRC's beliefs and support of Christian education through various books, pamphlets and our discussions with CRC church members.

Christian Reformed Church
Recommended Education Funding Model

4 Practices of the CRC, Catholic Church, and Lutheran Church

Christian Reformed Church	Catholic Church	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)
1. What is the denomination's core beliefs regarding Christian education and Christian schools?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian education of CRC children is an important tenet of the CRC denomination. In an essay written by John Bolt, entitled "The CRC and Support for Christian Education," Mr. Bolt presents the history of the CRC's support of Christian education and convincing arguments for continued CRC support of Christian schools. The emphasis on Christian day school education is deeply woven into the fabric of the CRC as a denomination. CRC officials, when visiting local congregations, always ask if the congregation has been promoting Christian day school education to its members. At a baby's baptism, the entire CRC congregation verbally makes the commitment to help instruct the baby in the Christian faith. Christian education is actively promoted in CRC congregations. Christian education is often the subject of Pastors' sermons. Though the support for Christian education is strong throughout the entire community, because of the financial burden more families are choosing not to send their children to Christian day schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Catholic Church supports Christian education as part of the general ministry of its parishes. As a general rule, education is not a specific focus in sermons or through the traditions of the Catholic mass. Families send their children to Catholic schools based upon their desire for a Catholic education and ability to finance the education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCMS feels that the Lutheran education of its children is the responsibility of the entire congregation. Generally, LCMS pastors support Lutheran education and schools through the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They send their children to the schools; They support Lutheran education during their prayers in services; They speak generally in support of the schools; and They may touch on Lutheran education during their sermons. The LCMS supports and encourages Lutheran education, but does not pressure its members to send their children to the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are a fundamental component of a WELS parish. Pastors do not specifically promote the WELS schools during services. However, when a new family joins a WELS parish, the family is visited by the pastor, school principal, and appropriate teachers to encourage sending the children to the WELS school.
2. How are the schools organized? What is their relationship with the church?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Christian day schools are organized as separate legal entities from CRC churches. They do not have any overlapping board members. The church and the schools are legally independent. Typically, the majority of the board of a Christian day school consists of CRC members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic elementary schools are a part of the ministry of their related parish. They are not separate legal entities. Catholic high schools are typically sponsored by several parishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCMS schools are part of the ministry of their related parish. As a general rule, they are not separate legal entities. High schools may be sponsored by several parishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WELS schools are part of the ministry of their related parish. As a general rule, they are not separate legal entities. High schools may be sponsored by several parishes.

Christian Reformed Church
Recommended Education Funding Model

Christian Reformed Church	Catholic Church	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod WELS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The schools are typically associated with one or more CRC churches in the geographic area. The churches whose members' children attend the schools generally provide financial support to the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Catholic parish that does not have its own school may associate itself with another parish's school. 		
3. Do the schools admit students from other denominations?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian day schools admit children from any denominations as long as their values and beliefs coincide with the Christian values and curriculum of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic schools admit students from other denominations. The families of the students must accept that their children will receive a Catholic education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCMS schools will admit students from outside the parish, as long as the families of those children are willing to actively participate in all activities of the school, including religious activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WELS schools will admit students from other denominations.
4. What are the primary sources of funding for the school?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of Christian day school funding is through tuition. Christian day schools receive some funding through alternate sources such as special collections from the associated churches and in some cases funding from a related foundation. Depending on the school and the associated churches, the families are personally responsible for tuition. Some congregations, such as the Brookfield CRC, fund 100% of its members' children's Christian day school tuition from the church's general fund. Other congregations, such as the Bethel CRC in Lansing, Illinois, fund none of the children's tuition. There are variations in between depending upon the congregation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic schools used to be 100% funded by the parish. Due to changing cost structure and other economic pressures, most schools now charge tuition. Catholic schools are included as part of the ministry of the related parish, and thus the operating expenses for the schools are part of the annual budget for the related parish. As a general rule, a parish pays part of the costs of the schools and tuition paid by the families of children enrolled in the school funds the remainder of the budget. Non-parish member children pay a higher tuition than parish member children. In addition to church funds and tuition, parishes often sponsor fundraisers for the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCMS schools are part of the parish. Thus, all expenses for the schools are part of the ministry of the parish and are funded by the parish. Generally, the LCMS churches encourage overall giving from their members, part of which will be used to fund the school. The LCMS schools charge tuition to the families enrolling students in the schools. Typically, the tuition is less for parish members' children. LCMS parishes also sponsor fundraisers and special collections to assist in the funding of the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WELS schools are part of the parish. Thus, all expenses for the schools are part of the ministry of the parish and are funded by the parish. As a general rule, WELS schools do not charge tuition to their parish members' children. WELS churches rely on special offerings from the congregation when the church budget falls short (because of school issues or other issues). WELS high schools charge tuition to all students. WELS members' children's tuition is subsidized by their congregation.
5. Does the school offer any financial aid or support to its students' families?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, the Christian day schools associated with CRC congregations do not provide financial aid directly to students' families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial aid is handled on a case by case basis between the families and the parish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCMS will not refuse any child admission to their schools for financial reasons. The LCMS parish will fund the child's education if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WELS schools provide financial aid to high school students.

Christian Reformed Church
Recommended Education Funding Model

Christian Reformed Church	Catholic Church	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod WELS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some schools provide minimal tuition subsidies for CRC members based upon contributions from the school foundation or other sources.Though the Christian day schools associated with CRC congregations do not provide direct financial aid, they are willing to assist families to request aid from their individual churches.			

5 Recommended Education Funding Model

A. Recommendation

Determining the most effective method of funding religious education has been an issue for the Christian denominations sponsoring schools for many years. As noted above, the Catholic Church and Lutheran synods have funded or subsidized their schools through the general ministry of the church for a number of years. However, changes in society over the years have necessitated the Catholics and Lutherans to reform their models for supporting and funding education. Recently, the same has become true for the CRC.

The CRC has supported Christian day schools since the denomination was founded in the mid-1800s. In an essay written by Professor John Bolt, entitled "The CRC and Support for Christian Education," Professor Bolt describes the CRC's long history of involvement with Christian day schools. The importance of sponsoring a Christian education for its youth is one of the core values and beliefs that caused the formation of the CRC originally. The CRC has remained committed to supporting Christian education for its youth throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. Even today, an entire CRC congregation, at the baptism of a member's child, orally reaffirms its commitment to assist with the Christian nurturing of the child in the church and beyond. However, changes within the CRC brought on by changes in American society have caused the CRC to carefully review its theological and economic views on the support of Christian education both within the church and in Christian day schools.

The Committee is directly addressing the theological perspective of the CRC's continued support of Christian education and Christian day schools. The purpose of this report is to supplement that report with a discussion of the economic and financial issues facing the CRC's support of Christian education and to make a recommendation for the funding of Christian education going forward.

The economic diversity within the CRC is one issue currently affecting the support of Christian education. CRC congregations strongly encourage their members to send their children to Christian day school. Many of these congregations do not provide financial support thus placing a significant financial burden upon these families. Depending on a family's economic situation, and the number of school age children, a family may or may not be able to afford the cost of sending a child or children to a Christian day school. As the costs of education increase, the burden upon these families has continued to increase. Young families with numerous children especially feel the financial impact of sending children to Christian schools. In some cases, young families have left CRC congregations because they could not afford Christian day school education for their children and felt too much pressure from the congregation on the importance of a Christian education for their children. The future of the CRC is its children. It is important to the denomination that its children are raised with the CRC religious worldview. If families cannot afford Christian education for their children, the CRC will begin to see its future endangered as its children are educated in schools that do not focus on the same religious values taught to students in Christian day schools. The danger of losing the support of these children indicates that the CRC needs to assist its members with children in the financing of Christian day school education.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

However, the overall financial well being of the congregations and their traditions need to be considered. If a congregation has not funded Christian education in the past, its other programs may be impacted by the demands on the church budget that a commitment to fund the tuition of its members' children education will create. The congregation members, especially those without children, may not be satisfied with promoting Christian day school education at the expense of the congregation's other programs. Based upon the general consensus of support for Christian day school education, it will be necessary for a broad segment of the congregation members to accept an additional financial commitment. If all of the members share the cost, the burden is spread among the entire Christian community in each church or group of churches. The effect will be to relieve some of the financial stress placed upon the younger families – a key issue raised during the course of the study.

Therefore, the recommendation of an education funding model must balance the concerns of the younger families, older members, and the financial well being of the congregations. Additionally, the economic and social diversity amongst the CRC congregations will impact the recommended education funding model. The model must include enough flexibility to meet the needs of the CRC's diverse group of congregations, or it will not serve the purpose for which it has been created.

To meet these objectives, we recommend that each CRC congregation fund a percentage (up to 100%) of the Christian day school tuition for its member children as part of the general ministry of the church. The percentage will be determined based upon the congregation's commitment to Christian education and the financial resources of each church. Additionally, the model will allow a church to determine what level of financial commitment it would like the individual families to maintain to ensure they are committed to Christian education. This model will provide enough flexibility to each congregation to determine how significant of a commitment it wants to make to Christian education. At the same time, it affirms the CRC's overall commitment to provide some financial relief to its families with fewer financial resources.

6 Summary of Tax Implications of Recommended Education Funding Model

A. Summary of Tax Implications

If the CRC adopts the Committee's proposal, the CRC churches should not be required to report the value of a child's education as a quid pro quo to the members with children enrolled in the Christian day schools. Thus, the members' charitable donations may be deductible as charitable contributions pursuant to IRC §170. Revenue Ruling 83-104 provides guidance that states, under the proper facts, contributions to a church with children that attend a related school are deductible. To support this conclusion, the CRC and CRC churches need to monitor their actions to engage in the "Do's" listed below and avoid the "Don't's" listed below. The CRC should establish its program in a way that the facts closely resemble example six of Revenue Ruling 83-104 and that avoids the negative facts established in court cases and other IRS rulings. If the IRS were to challenge this position it would likely argue that parents with children receiving tuition benefits received quid pro quo in return for their contributions to the church. If the IRS were successful in this argument, the CRC church could be penalized for failing to properly disclose a quid pro quo contribution to its members. In addition, the contributions of individual members would likely be disallowed up to the subsidized amount. The attached technical memorandum (Exhibit 1) discusses the tax implications of the recommendation in more detail.

B. Do's

The following list summarizes facts and actions that support the members' position that the contributions to the church should be treated as charitable contributions and that there is no reportable quid pro quo:

- The congregation should formally resolve that funding part or all of its members' children's tuition is an obligation of the church. This obligation should be assumed as a general obligation of the church.
- Payments of tuition to the Christian day schools should be made from each CRC church's general operating funds. The school should bill the church directly.
- The portion of the tuition subsidized by the church becomes a church liability. If the church is unable to pay, the liability should not revert to the parent.
- Any portion of tuition not paid by the church should be paid by the parent directly to the school.
- Church members will contribute in accordance with the principles of stewardship as articulated within the CRC. The concept is if individuals accept the premise that they are not owners of the material blessings entrusted to them by God, but only stewards charged with the responsibility of using these gifts for kingdom purposes, then they will contribute in accordance with their financial abilities and their understanding of Christian stewardship.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

C. Don'ts

The following list summarized actions and facts that the IRS may rely upon to argue that members' contributions are in actuality non-deductible tuition payments:

- The CRC congregations should not solicit nor require specific contributions from members with children in any way that is different from other members of the congregation
- A church should not request, orally or written, that the families with children in school give their tuition savings to the church.
- A church should not create a separate education fund for support of the Christian schools, nor set aside specific contributions from families with children in school to go directly to the schools.
- A church should not create the expectation, whether documented or implicit, that its members with children are expected to contribute more money to the church than other congregation members.
- A church should not create any documentation, promotional material, or correspondence that specifically allocates the cost of the school to only the members with children in the school.

Appendix C-3 Report (Canada)

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Memo

Date: October 10, 2002
To: The Files
From: Tony Ancimer, Michael Lepore, Lisa Pallisco
Subject: Funding of Christian Day Schools

FACTS

The Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") is a Protestant denomination of about 950 churches and 280,000 members in North America, including 243 churches and 82,000 members in Canada. One of the primary tenets of CRC theology is Christian education. Christian day schools, organized as separate legal entities from CRC churches, serve students and families who are members of the CRC and other denominations. Over the years, the CRC churches have maintained a close relationship with the Christian day schools. As part of this relationship, the CRC churches have provided financial assistance to the schools. This assistance includes Sunday collections and fundraisers that appeal to all members of the CRC congregations. However, significant sources of funding for CRC sponsored Christian day schools include tuition and government subsidies. The CRC has not adopted a uniform methodology for use by its churches in determining whether and/or how to fund the Christian education of their members' children.

Recently, the CRC Synod 2000 appointed a committee to study Christian day school education ("the Committee") whose purpose is to determine whether the denomination should reaffirm its theological support of Christian education (this was last done in the 1950's). The Committee has concluded that the CRC ought to reaffirm this support. As part of its mandate, the Committee has developed a recommendation for the funding of the Christian education of CRC members' children that the individual congregations may adopt.

The CRC views the Christian education of youth as fundamental to its religious beliefs. At a child's baptism, the entire congregation makes an oral commitment to support the Christian education of that child. In order to fulfill the congregation's obligation to support the Christian education of CRC youth, the Committee looked at various models for funding Christian day schools, including one model where all of the tuition for students attending day school is paid by the church. The Committee's final recommendation was for CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education. The Committee recommended that the CRC church councils seek professional legal, tax, and accounting advice when drafting such plans.

Deloitte
Touche
Tohmatsu

ISSUE

If CRC churches develop a plan that provides direct financial support to Christian schools and, as a result, the children of CRC members are provided with some subsidy for day school education, will contributions to the church by the parishioners be considered “gifts” for which a charitable receipt can be issued, thus enabling the parishioners to claim a tax credit?

CONCLUSION

If a CRC church adopts the model whereby tuition for students attending Christian day school is paid, in whole or in part, by the church the whole amount of the contributions made to the church by parents with children that receive a tuition subsidy would likely not be considered “gifts”, because these parents would be receiving consideration, in the form of the Christian education of their children, in return for their contributions. Therefore, no charitable receipt should be issued with respect to these contributions. This is supported by both case law and CCRA interpretations. It should be noted that it is the whole donation that is made by a parent that would be deemed not to be a gift. Therefore, where a parent donates an amount that is in excess of any tuition subsidy received by their children, it is the whole amount of the donation that does not qualify for a tax credit and not just the portion equal to the subsidy.

Donations by members who do not have children receiving a subsidized education should qualify as a gift, since they will not be receiving any form of consideration in return for their contribution. However, there is a risk that the CCRA could disagree with this conclusion with respect to donations made by members that are related to children attending the day school; i.e., donations by grandparents or siblings.

Therefore, the model that has been recommended for funding the Christian education of members' children in the United States is not an ideal structure for Canada. There are other options available for funding the schools that may produce a more advantageous tax result for the donors. If desirable, these options could be explored.

DISCUSSION

Registered Charity

A registered charity is an independent body, resident in Canada, which has been registered as a “charitable organization”, a “public foundation” or a “private foundation”. A charitable organization is generally characterized as an initiator of charitable activities and is typically responsible for administering charitable programs through its own representatives. A public foundation on the other hand, funds the charitable activities of other registered organizations. Lastly, a private foundation can behave in the manner of either an organization or a foundation, the distinguishing characteristic is the degree to which it is privately controlled or funded. It is our understanding that both the individual CRC churches and the associated CRC schools are registered as charitable organizations.

Registered charities are exempt from taxation on their income and are entitled to issue donation receipts that entitle their recipients to a tax credit or a tax deduction. Gifts to registered charities qualify for tax credits if an individual makes the gift¹. The tax credit is a non-refundable and non-transferable federal tax credit that is deductible against regular income tax otherwise payable. The deduction from income tax

¹ A gift made by a corporation may qualify for a tax deduction. However, only the rules applicable to gifts made by an individual are discussed in this memo.

otherwise payable is calculated by applying the lowest federal income tax rate for the year (currently 16%) to the lesser of \$200 and the individual's total gift for the year. The tax credit for individual gifts in excess of \$200 is calculated using the highest federal income tax rate (currently 29%). Charitable gifts also qualify for a provincial tax credit that is available to offset provincial income tax that would otherwise be payable. Provincial tax credits vary from province to province. In Ontario, the tax credit is 6.2% of the first \$200 in donations, and 11.16% for donations in excess of \$200.

Gifts

As discussed above, in order to qualify for a tax credit, a contribution by an individual to a registered charity must be classified as a "gift" and the donor must receive an official charitable receipt. There is no definition of gift in the *Income Tax Act* (the "Act"). Therefore, courts applying the provisions of the Act dealing with credits for gifts apply the common law definition of the term. The common law definition is stated in *Friedberg v. MNR*:²

a gift is a voluntary transfer of property owned by a donor to a donee, in return for which no benefit or consideration flows to the donor.

CCRA's position on the meaning of "gift" is set out in Interpretation Bulletin 110R3 "Gifts and Official Donation Receipts". IT-110R3 defines a gift as follows:

A gift ...is a voluntary transfer of property without valuable consideration. Generally, a gift is made if all three of the conditions listed below are satisfied:

- (a) some property – usually cash – is transferred by a donor to a registered charity
- (b) the transfer is voluntary; and
- (c) the transfer is made without expectation of return. No benefit of any kind may be provided to the donor or to anyone designated by the donor, except where the benefit is of nominal value.³

In document number 9901985 "Tuition Fees and Gifts", CCRA provides further commentary on what it considers a gift by stating that:

"any obligation, contractual, moral or otherwise, on the donor would cause the transfer to lose its status as a gift. In order to be a gift, the transfer of property must be made without conditions, from a detached and disinterested generosity, out of affection, respect, charity or like impulse, and not made from the constraining forces of any moral or legal duty."

CCRA's definition of a gift is generally supported by the jurisprudence. The only difficult element of the definition is the prohibition against consideration being received by the donor. Several court cases over the past few decades have examined the issue of "consideration" with respect to contributions to a registered charity. The most important of these cases are discussed below together with an analysis of their application to CRC's facts.

² 89 DTC 5115; [1989] 1 CTC 274 (FCTD) varied 92 DTC 6031; 1992 1 CTC 1, (FCA)

³ A benefit is considered to have a nominal value where the fair market value does not exceed the lesser of \$50 or 10% of the amount of the gift. A benefit is not considered to have nominal value where its fair market value cannot be determined.

In *Woolner v. The Attorney General of Canada*⁴, the Federal Court of Appeal found that donations to a church were not gifts. The taxpayers, who were members of the First Mennonite Church, made contributions to the church and received charitable donations receipts in exchange. The members could designate that part of their donations to the church were to be used to provide students of Mennonite school with bursaries. The Student Aid Committee of the church had determined that as policy matter every student who was member or child of a member of church that applied for bursary should receive one. Thus no student was denied enrolment at the school for failure to pay tuition fees. A very small percentage of the church congregation, all of whom were parents of children who obtained bursaries, donated a large part of the money contributed to the fund out of which the bursaries were paid. The court felt that the taxpayers made their contributions to the church with the anticipation that their children would be provided with a bursary. While a parent could theoretically not pay any money to the church for their child to receive a bursary, all parents would also presumably understand that if each and every parent refused to donate money to the church, there would be insufficient money available to provide students with bursaries. Further, a report by the Student Aid Committee stated that: "It is assumed that the student and/or parents will contribute as much as they are able to the fund." Thus, despite the fact that the contributions were voluntary, they were made with the anticipation of benefit or advantage of material nature; that benefit being the bursary for their children. Therefore, the donations were not gifts and the donors could not claim a tax credit.

The CRC proposal, like the First Mennonite Church, expects all members to give what they can afford to support the church, without any extra burden or pressure borne by those families with children in the school. All congregation members will be encouraged to give as much as they can afford and their conscience dictates. The recommendation is slightly distinguishable from *Woolner*, since all payments to the school will be made from the church's general fund. Thus, unlike the First Mennonite Church, parents would not designate that part of their donations to the church are to be used to provide students with bursaries. This distinguishing aspect however is arguably not overly significant. The classification of a donation to a registered charity as a gift hinges on the expectation of return. The fact that the donations are technically voluntary in nature would not impact this analysis. If CRC parishioners anticipate that, in return for their contributions to the church, their children would be provided with a Christian education, they have received consideration and their donations would not qualify as a gift. The consideration received does not have to be material in nature. If parents consider they have a primary duty to provide their children with a Christian education in a separate Christian school, and that this obligation is discharged by donations to the church, then the parents will have received consideration in the form of a release from their moral obligation. Thus, where there is a moral obligation involved, the courts have found that there is a *per se quid pro quo*. This could be true irrespective of whether parents are explicitly compelled to donate funds to the church or whether their donations were donated to the general fund or designated for student bursaries.

In *MNR v. Zandstra*⁵, the taxpayers treated \$200 per family of the total sum paid to their children's school (which was a registered charitable organization) as tuition fees and the balance as a gift. CCRA argued that \$200 per child attending the school should be treated as tuition fees and the balance as a gift. The court upheld CCRA's position, even after accepting that the payments to the school were voluntary and not pursuant to a contractual obligation. The court found that it was clear from the evidence presented that the parents had a primary duty to their own children to provide them with a Christian education in a separate Christian school and that this obligation was discharged by payments made to the school. Therefore, the parents received consideration, i.e. the Christian education of their children, in return for

⁴ *Woolner v. MNR* (1999), 99 DTC 5722, 2000 1 CTC 35 (FCA)

⁵ *MNR v Zandstra*, 74 DTC 6416; [1974] CTC 503

their payments to the school, and thus these payments were not considered gifts. The Zandstra case cannot be materially distinguished from the CRC proposal. CRC views the Christian education of youth as fundamental to its religious beliefs. Thus, CRC parishioners could be seen as having a moral duty to provide their children with a Christian education. This duty is fulfilled through donations to the church, which could be used to partially or fully fund the education of their children attending the schools. Once again, the courts found that a release from a moral obligation was sufficient to deem payments made to the church not to be gifts.

In the *Queen v. McBurney*⁶, the taxpayer paid amounts to three Christian religious schools attended by his children. Each school was a non-profit organization and a registered charity. Parents were requested to make financial contributions but no child was turned away because of financial hardship. CCRA took the position that the payments were on account of tuition fees and not gifts. Accordingly, they disallowed the deductions claimed by the taxpayer. The Federal Court of Appeal sided with CCRA and found that the payments were not gifts. The court determined that the taxpayer made payments "in pursuance of his perceived Christian duty to ensure his children received the kind of education these schools provided." Therefore, the court could not accept the argument that, since the parents were under no legal obligation to contribute, the payments should be considered as gifts. It further stated that:

The securing of the kind of education a parent desired for his/her child and the makings of the payments went hand in hand. Both grew out of the same sense of personal obligation, as a Christian parent, to ensure that for his/her child received a Christian education and, in return, to pay money to the operating organizations according to... their means.

Therefore, the payments were not considered gifts. The facts in the *McBurney* case are similar to the CRC proposal. It would therefore be very difficult to argue that the CRC members' do not, at the very least, have a moral duty to ensure that their children receive a Christian education and that this duty is fulfilled through donations made to the church. As discussed above, once a moral obligation exists on the part of the donor, the transfer loses its status as a gift.

Donations to Secular and Religious Schools

As discussed above, tuition fees paid to an educational institution in Canada are not considered gifts; they are fees for value. As such, official receipts designated for charitable donations may not be issued for such tuition fees, even where the educational institution itself is a registered Canadian charitable organization. There are two exceptions to this general rule where a portion or the entire amount paid to an educational institution may be considered a gift. The two special circumstances are for schools that teach religion exclusively and those that operate in a dual capacity providing both secular and religious education. These exceptions are outlined by CCRA in Information Circular 75-23 "tuition fees and charitable donations paid to privately supported secular and religious schools". Further, it should be noted that, as a result of the *Woolner*⁷ case, these exceptions are now part of Canadian law and are not merely administrative concessions.

If a school teaches religion exclusively and is a registered Canadian charitable organization, payments for students attending the school are not considered to be tuition fees. This is due to the fact that receiving religious education for one's children is not viewed by CCRA as receiving consideration even through this

⁶ *Queen v. McBurney*, 85 DTC 5433; [1985] 2 CTC 214

⁷ *Woolner v. MNR* (1999), 99 DTC 5722; 2000 1 CTC 35 (FCA)

may be viewed as inconsistent with the above noted cases. Official charitable donation receipts may be issued for payments made to these schools.

If a school is operating in a dual capacity providing both secular and religious education, charitable donation receipts may be issued for the portion of the amount paid to attend the school relating to religious education. Currently, there are two methods of calculating the portion of donations that relates to religious education depending on how the school maintains its accounting records.

The most favorable treatment is received where a school segregates the cost of operating the secular portion of the school and the cost of providing religious training. The net cost of operating the secular portion of the school is to be prorated over the number of pupils enrolled during the school year to determine a "cost per pupil" for the secular training. An official receipt can be issued for that portion of a payment, which is in excess of the pro-rated "cost-per-pupil".

If the school cannot separate the cost of operating the secular portion of the school and the cost of providing religious training, a donation receipt can be issued for that part of the payment that is in excess of the net operating "cost per pupil" of the whole school for a school year.

The full contribution to such a school by a person who is neither the parent nor guardian of a pupil attending the school should qualify as a gift for which an official receipt can be issued.

- c: Peter Borgdorf, Christian Reformed Church Foundation
Scott L. Hirsch, Erica A. Lazzo, Mary E. Rauschenberg, D&T Chicago

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VI. Recommendations

Appendices

Appendix A: Final Survey Results of the Church Education Survey

Appendix B: Summary of Responses to Leadership Training Questionnaire

I. Introduction

- A. *Mandate and grounds*

The Committee to Study Church Education was formed by Synod 2001, with the following mandate and grounds:

In consultation with CRC Publications, this committee will have as its mandate:

- a. To study what is happening in the Christian Reformed Church with respect to educating our members in Bible basics and Reformed perspectives and life view.
- b. To make recommendations about the vision for education ministry, the mandate of CRC Publications, how best to promote the Reformed view of life and faith, and any other issues that arise out of its study.
- c. To review the relationship of church education to the other ministries of the local churches (e.g., youth ministry, worship) and to make recommendations regarding those relationships as appropriate.

Grounds:

- 1) Recognition of the importance of and the vision for church education seems to have decreased significantly. Because growing in faith, knowledge, and holiness is fundamental to a world and life view that is ever reforming, this decline needs to be explored and challenged.
- 2) Denominational loyalty to CRC Publications and to material with a Reformed perspective is declining. This suggests the need for further study to guide the churches.
- 3) CRC churches appear to be committing less time, effort, and resources to educational ministries.
- 4) The CRC has a fragmented approach to discipleship. It has no overall cradle-to-grave plan for nurturing God's covenant people to become fully devoted, ever-growing disciples of Christ.
- 5) The important task of reviewing and visioning for our educational ministries in the CRC should not be left solely in the hands of CRC Publications.
- 6) We need to determine if the CRC is providing adequate funding to promote the important ministry of spiritual formation and the distinctly Reformed materials that will support spiritual growth.
- 7) Synod 1991 urged churches and classes to take their baptismal vows seriously. Ephesians 4:12-13 instructs us to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, and to the measure of the full stature of Christ. Strong educational ministries are needed to accomplish this.

(Acts of Synod 2001, p. 513)

B. Review of Classis Alberta North's study and overture

Much of the foundational work for this committee was born out of extensive consultations and study undertaken by Classis Alberta North in 2000 and 2001. Their thoughtful overture to synod in 2001 was the result of a thorough study of church education among children, youth, and young adults throughout Classis Alberta North.

Congregational surveys were completed and collated. Several hours were devoted to the topic at the fall 2000 meeting of Classis Alberta North, and the Classical Youth Ministry Committee was mandated to seek more input from local church leaders and teachers and to come to the following classis meeting with an action plan.

In January 2001, the Classical Youth Ministry Committee hosted forums to which most churches in Classis Alberta North sent representatives. In small-group discussions, teachers and leaders considered the strengths and weaknesses of their current programs and/or ministries as well as their greatest concerns and the issues raised from the surveys and previous classis discussions.

The Classical Youth Ministry Committee came to the conclusion that the church needs to clearly define the purpose of educational ministries in terms of making and nurturing disciples and to shape its learning experiences toward this ultimate objective. Classis suggested that the big-picture purpose of the educational ministries of the church might be defined as follows:

To provide learning experiences within a faith community that encourage and nurture the faith development, growth and obedient, joyful living of fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.

Specific components of that nurturing experience will include:

- Teaching the Word of God and the doctrines of the church (onward),
- Helping learners understand and practice the spiritual disciplines that will strengthen their personal relationship with God (upward) and
- Equipping learners with knowledge and skills to serve others, build the Body and extend the Kingdom (outward).

(Classical Youth Ministry Committee report to
Classis Alberta North, Spring 2001)

Surveys and discussions within Classis Alberta North pointed to a number of concerns with respect to faith nurture:

- Insufficient vision for and commitment to faith nurture on the part of adults.
- Difficulty getting and keeping committed, equipped, quality teachers.
- Teacher and/or leader burnout.
- Lack of parental support and adult modeling.
- Negative parental attitudes.
- A scarcity of involved men.
- Catechism viewed as optional and a last priority.
- Lack of adult interest in growing in faith, knowledge, and holiness.
- Little interest in teacher training.
- Weak council support and/or interest in the educational ministries.

It was observed that if adults are not experiencing the joy of growing, it will be difficult for them to encourage our children and youth to grow.

Classis concluded that the growth of faith and knowledge needs to take place within a community of faith. In Old Testament times, faith nurturing took place within the family as parents and grandparents talked to children “when they rose up and when they sat down . . .” (Deut. 6: 7). Children were included in every part of the faith community’s life—the festivals, worship, and the teachings of the spiritual leaders. By the time of the New Testament, the institutional elements of school and synagogue were added to the education process. The more the church becomes an organic family of faith, the better it nurtures faith in its children. Adults, too, need a community of faith that encourages, supports, challenges, and disciples them.

Classis Alberta North concluded that the number-one priority for classis and the denomination should be to make spiritual vitality and renewal in adults a reality. The conclusion adopted by classis is pointed:

A spiritually committed and spirit-filled faith community will naturally pass on the faith—inwardly, outwardly, and upwardly, to children, youth, and new believers because its members believe in, are committed to, are excited about, and want to share their own inward, upward, and outward growth.

(Minutes of Classis Alberta North, March 9-10, 2001)

Classis Alberta North responded to their own report with a number of specific actions. In addition to supporting the overture from Rocky Mountain House CRC and sending it on to synod, it also adopted these specific actions:

- That a classis-sponsored education ministry leaders' conference be organized.
- That classis declare September to be Joy of Growing Month and develop that theme in every church.
- That classis encourage and model prayer and fasting for spiritual renewal.

Synod 2001 embraced the concerns raised by Classis Alberta North and determined that this issue is significant for the entire denomination. It is important for all congregations across the denomination to become spirit-filled faith communities. Synod, therefore, created the present study committee to look at the needs and concerns identified by Classis Alberta North and to make recommendations for more effective and wholistic faith nurturing in our churches.

II. The committee's response

A. What we did

The committee held several meetings with a wide variety of people who are concerned about faith nurture and the role that church education plays in one's spiritual journey. In addition, it enlisted input from across the denomination through two surveys. The committee:

- Met with the synodical Committee to Study Christian Day School Education.
- Met with Dr. Syd Hielema of the former Youth Ministry Committee.
- Met with personnel from Home Missions.
- Reviewed the CRC Publications mandate.
- Conducted two denominational surveys—one sent to church education leaders in all congregations and the other to young people in the twelfth grade.
- Surveyed CRC-related agencies concerning their leadership training and consulting networks.
- Gathered data from CRC Publications and from the denominational office.

B. Church education survey

The committee sent a survey to the church education leaders of 983 congregations. Its purpose was to aid the committee in determining which church education programs are offered to members by the local church and the extent of participation in them, how such programs are overseen, what training is provided to teachers and leaders, what resources are used, what impact educational ministries are having on the life of the church and its members, and how the CRC agencies could serve the local churches in their educational ministries.

Forty-three percent, or 419 churches, completed the survey. Who were the church education leaders who completed the survey? Thirty-four percent were

ministers or pastors; 21 percent were education committees, its chair, or a member; 14 percent were directors of education; and 11 percent were church or Sunday school superintendents or directors. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. Only highlights of this survey's results are presented here.

While the return rate from both the United States and Canada was good, and all classes were represented, there was significant underrepresentation of emerging and small (150 or fewer members) churches. Consequently, there is an underrepresentation of churches composed largely of ethnically diverse people. Survey results, therefore, best represent church education ministries in organized, middle-sized-to-large churches. The complete report in the appendix assesses the extent to which the responding churches accurately represent the denomination as a whole.

About 90 percent of the churches reported offering church or Sunday school programs for children in grade levels from preschool to sixth grade, and about 70 percent reported offering them for seventh through twelfth grades. A wide range of other programs, such as youth groups, small group ministries, GEMS, Cadets, catechism, preconfession class, adult education, children's worship, and Coffee Break are also offered (Appendix A, Table 1) in most churches.

Asked what percentage of members eligible for these ministries actually attended them, a majority of respondents indicated between 67 percent and 100 percent. There was one exception: 88 percent of the churches offering adult education (including small groups) reported less than 67 percent participation (Appendix A, Table 2).

Were people from outside the church participating in the various church education programs? About a quarter of the churches reported that this was true in the case of church or Sunday school. Over half reported this was the case for GEMS, Cadets, Coffee Break, Little Lambs/Story Hour, and youth groups seventh through eighth and ninth through twelfth grades (Appendix A, Table 1).

When asked if they had a vision-setting procedure for their education ministry, 38 percent of the church education leaders indicated that they did. Regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the education ministry, however, takes place in 66 percent of the congregations. Forty percent of the churches reported that they have a faith nurture plan for children through adults (Appendix A, Table 3).

When it comes to oversight of the education ministry, 78 percent of the churches reported that the elders were aware of what church or Sunday school curriculum materials were being used, 80 percent have a council representative on the education committee, and 73 percent of the ministers are involved in teaching at least one church school or Sunday school or catechism class. In the case of 62 percent of the churches, however, council members do not visit church or Sunday school classrooms at least once annually (Appendix A, Table 5).

According to a majority (about 60 percent) of church education leaders, there is essentially little or no coordination between what is taught in the church or Sunday school program and what is being taught in other programs serving children and youth such as GEMS, Cadets, or youth groups (Appendix A, Table 6). This lack of integration has also been acknowledged at the denominational level where it was one of the observations that led to the formation of the Integrated Children and Youth Ministry (ICYM) team.

Based on a number of questions concerning the training and equipping of teachers, among 67 percent of the churches, church or Sunday school teachers received no training within the past year (Appendix A, Table 7). For those who received training, it was most often conducted annually and primarily by church staff.

The Heidelberg Catechism is being taught in 87 percent of the churches, most typically at the ninth and tenth grade levels and usually in weekly classes (Appendix A, Tables 10 & 11). In response to the question about what other expressions of the Reformed faith were being taught in the church education program, 43 percent of the churches indicated that they do not teach any of the other confessions or *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

Asked how, in addition to teaching confessions in the church school program, their church communicated the Reformed faith to its members, 74 percent said by catechism preaching, 55 percent by other confessional preaching, 67 percent in preconfession classes, and 53 percent in new-members classes (Appendix A, Table 13).

When asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about the impact of educational ministries in the church, church education leaders responded quite positively.

- 96 percent agreed that participants in the programs gained a basic understanding of Scripture.
- 86 percent agreed that participants were being effectively disciplined.
- 77 percent agreed they were gaining a basic understanding of Reformed doctrine.
- 69 percent agreed they were being challenged and equipped to share their faith.
- 79 percent agreed they were being challenged to develop their gifts.
- 64 percent agreed they were being equipped to use their gifts.

Church education leaders were divided, however, over whether or not participants were developing their Christian leadership potential through their educational ministries; 58 percent thought they were, but 41 percent thought that was not so (Appendix A, Table 14).

When it comes to faith nurture, 77 percent of the churches reported that they have implemented a prayer ministry. When asked whether certain other ministries have been implemented, however, only 33 percent of the churches answered that a mentoring program was in place, 32 percent said spiritual-growth retreats, and 39 percent cited a leadership-development program (Appendix A, Table 15).

When asked what percentage of a congregation's children attends Christian schools, the statistics are somewhat different between the United States and Canada. Among responding churches in the United States, for grades kindergarten through eighth grade, the estimated median average per congregation is 63 percent and, for ninth through twelfth grades, this average is 57 percent. In Canada, these averages are 67 percent and 43 percent respectively. In other words, on average, in Canada there is a higher percentage of children attending Christian schools in kindergarten through eighth grades, compared to the United States, and a lower percentage attending Christian schools in ninth through twelfth grades (Appendix A, Table 16).

An important element of the survey was to determine what kinds of resources were being used in church education, and why. Eighty-seven percent of the churches in the survey said they do use CRC materials in many of their church education programs (Appendix A, Table 17). The survey also asked what types of materials were being used in specific church education programs. For each program offered, respondents were requested to indicate whether the materials used were from CRC Publications or another source, and, if another, what specific materials were being used. Between 74 percent and 87 percent of the churches said they were using CRC Publications materials in their church or Sunday school programs (Appendix A, Table 1). Over 90 percent of the churches that offer these programs reported using CRC Publications materials in catechism, Little Lambs/Story Hour, and Coffee Break Ministry. Over 80 percent are using CRC-related materials for GEMS and Cadets. Programs using CRC materials less than 50 percent of the time were college and career groups, youth groups, new-members classes, adult education classes, seniors groups, and combined men's and women's Bible study groups.

When asked what factors influenced their decisions about using CRC Publications materials, about three-quarters (74 percent) of the respondents pointed to a Reformed emphasis, 69 percent indicated confidence in the material, 61 percent said relevance, and 59 percent indicated ease of teaching (Appendix A, Table 18). Only 19 percent of the respondents cited cost as a factor that influenced their decision to use CRC Publications materials.

When asked how the denominational agencies can best help congregations in their educational ministries, 68 percent said these agencies should continue to publish materials (Appendix A, Table 19). More than one-half of the respondents said that leadership training for volunteers (59 percent) and regional training events (54 percent) should be provided.

C. Youth survey

A survey was sent out to high school seniors across the denomination to determine how the church's education and faith nurture program had impacted their lives. About 1,175 surveys were returned from approximately 40 percent of the churches in Canada and the United States. From these limited statistics, it should not be concluded that they reflect the faith nurture of all young people.

While not discounting the need to do better and presuming that those who did respond may have a more positive attitude toward the church than those who did not, the results are very positive. Adding the strongly agree and agree categories together results in the following:

- 94 percent of the respondents are sure of their salvation.
- 85 percent say they have a dynamic, growing relationship with Christ.
- 85 percent say they pray.
- 89 percent say they are excited about their faith.
- 86 percent say they love God.
- 86 percent say God's will is important, although only 72 percent say that they live out God's will as it is related in the Ten Commandments.
- 96 percent worship weekly, but only 78 percent look forward to it.
- 75 percent have a servant attitude.
- 78 percent give regularly to the church.

- 80 percent are committed to being involved in the church.
- 89 percent know about *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.
- 98 percent know and understand the Apostles' Creed.

The lowest scores were recorded as follows:

- 57 percent read Scripture regularly.
- 68 percent understand the fruit of the Spirit.
- 65 percent understand the gifts of the Spirit.
- 65 percent say they are able to share their faith.
- 69 percent can share the way of salvation.

Regarding their experience in the church, we note the following:

- 80 percent believe church or Sunday school was a positive experience.
- 84 percent believe youth group was a positive experience.
- 84 percent believe the church has equipped them.
- 80 percent believe the church trains effectively.

The home is still the most influential in terms of nurturing their faith walk with 33 percent pointing to the home, 24 percent pointing to the church, 14 percent pointing to the school, and 19 percent pointing to other (generally individuals).

D. Leadership training survey

All of the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church as well as a number of related organizations were surveyed in 2003 to determine the extent of the training they provide for church staff and volunteers. The wide range of leadership training that is taking place across the continent is impressive.

- GEMS has 25 trainers who provide 3 or 4 workshops a year. About 2,200 counselors have been trained in the past year.
- Cadets has 7 regional trainers and a team of 107 local trainers who provide a number of specific workshops.
- Friendship USA has 9 trainers in 6 states. Workshops are held at 10 conferences. Some of the trainers have special-education degrees. Friendship Canada has 1 coordinator and no trainers.
- Youth Unlimited has more than 70 trainers across North America. More than 1,000 leaders have been trained per year in various aspects of leadership, including Compass 21.
- Home Missions has trainers or regional staff across North America. Training relates to small groups ministries and Coffee Break. More than 2,000 have been trained per year, mainly through workshops.
- Children and Worship has 6 CRC trainers in the United States and none in Canada, 6 Presbyterian Church in Canada trainers, and 10 Reformed Church in America trainers across North America. Training is done both in response to requests and through invitation to events. About 175 people were trained over the past year.
- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has between 7 and 10 staff, many of whom are college and seminary faculty and local ministers. Most of the training takes place at the annual symposium or at regional or congregational events. About 1,200 people are trained yearly.

- Deaconal Ministries of Canada has 16 regional trainers across Canada. They provide new deacons' orientation and also lead a number of workshops. Several hundred are trained annually.
- Christian Stewardship Services has 1.5 trainers in Ontario. Most of the training takes place at the congregational level. More than 200 people were trained in a given year.
- Firstfruits/Barnabas provides extensive training in biblical stewardship issues. More than 150 congregations have benefited by their expertise
- The Office of Pastor-Church Relations offers annual training of its regional pastors across the denomination.
- Until 2002, CRC Publications' Faith Alive provided extensive training to church or Sunday school leaders.

E. Assessing ethnically diverse and emerging churches

The number of surveys returned from ethnically diverse and emerging churches was too low to yield reliable results. Data obtained from CRC Publications of sales to those churches indicated that few emerging and ethnic churches use CRC materials. Therefore, meetings were held with Home Missions personnel to gain more information that would help us to assess the health of discipling ministries in these churches.

Based on these sources of information, it became clear that ethnically diverse and emerging churches face a real challenge in discipling their members in the Reformed faith. Some churches begin with people for whom English is a second language and who may have little or no biblical knowledge or understanding of Reformed confessions. These churches often find that more traditional, formal educational channels such as Sunday school do not offer the most effective way to disciple new believers. Language, cultural, and priority issues present significant obstacles to consistently nurturing members and adherents in Reformed doctrine, world-and-life view, and practice through formal programs. Consequently, use of CRC Publications resources also remains low in these churches.

When a new church is planted, the new church developer tends to focus initially on outreach, children's ministries, small group discipling, and worship ministries. As the church begins to mature, more formal discipleship programs are developed over time. Because the orientation is toward nonchurched people, faith nurture that does happen tends to be specific to the basics of the Christian faith per se and to Reformed accents. Instruction and training in Reformed distinctives, confessions, worldview, ecclesiology, and so forth tend to be more implicit rather than explicit. Home Missions is undergoing a fundamental restructuring process that will better integrate services to developing churches. Regionalized teams will be able to more effectively address the kinds of concerns as the one addressed in this section of our report.

Important steps have already been taken by Home Missions and CRC Publications to orient church planters to this important responsibility in the development of faith nurture from a Reformed perspective in the churches they serve. We need to continue to equip ethnically diverse and emerging churches to carry out these functions intentionally and sensitively. CRC Publications, together with CRC-related agencies, need to continue to work with church planters to develop strategies that will provide solid biblical, Reformed instruction and training in innovative ways.

III. Observations

"Toward a Unified Church School Curriculum" (*Acts of Synod 1970*) has been regarded as the definitive statement on church school curriculum for over thirty years. Rereading that report, one discovers that it is both surprisingly relevant and amazingly outdated. While it captures the essence of the need for Reformed content in our program and curriculum, times have changed significantly both inside and outside of the church.

The 1970 report was written well before postmodernity at a time when curriculum meant *print* and when education meant *classroom*. It was written at a time when the denomination was quite homogeneous and was unified theologically and pedagogically. Most of those who attended the church in 1970 grew up in it and systematically traveled through the curriculum with their peers. The focus was on formal learning that came to a conclusion once one graduated from high school, rather than on faith nurture that is seen as a lifelong process. Men's and women's societies devoted to Bible study and fellowship were beginning to decline in favor of other voluntary groupings. Times have changed considerably since then and so, too, has the church.

A. *Changing times*

We live in a postmodern world, characterized by the following:

- A loss of confidence in science and technology to create a better world.
- A distrust of institutions and governments.
- A relativistic view of truth, beliefs, lifestyles, and morality.
- A lack of rootedness in the past and a distrust of tradition.
- A growing individualism that fragments family and community.
- A thirst for meaning, connectedness, and satisfying relationships.
- A breakdown of life and communication into small, disconnected fragments.
- A life lived awash in a constant barrage of media messages.
- A consumer mentality that carries over into church, school, and the workplace.
- A significant delay in forming committed relationships such as marriage and family and yet an increased desire for and involvement in community.
- A greatly reduced expectation of embarking on a single career that will last a lifetime.
- A shift in leadership and organizational structures from hierarchical authority forms to more holistic team approaches.

One of the tenets of postmodernism is that we do not label negatively individuals or streams of thought. Everyone and everything is valid.

Postmodernism is clearly reflected in increased congregationalism and especially in congregations' approaches to mission, curriculum, and denominational giving. By embracing other mission endeavors and other curricula, congregations are often perceived as displaying a lack of denominational loyalty.

The church's view on church education has evolved over the past thirty years with a clearer emphasis on faith nurture and holistic discipleship. What was implicit in the 1970s is explicit today.

One of the significant areas of change is in the way we communicate. Today, we communicate on a variety of levels. We still communicate orally, but much

of our communication takes place technologically in the form of e-mail, Internet chat rooms, cell phones, or hand-held devices. We are also more likely to surf the Internet than turn to an encyclopedia in our quest for instant answers. That fundamentally changes the way in which we interact with our world and with each other.

Children and teens tend to develop their own style of communication. They have become more individualistic. They search the Internet widely and are exposed to virtually every kind of philosophy and belief system—whether it is in music, literature, chat forums, the arts, or science. They speak of relativism and of finding truth. How are they to find truth on the Internet? How are they to discern between one individual's rant and a synodical proclamation?

Children, teens, and adults are also heavily influenced by the changing face of television, music, and movies. These audio and visual media form the foundation for discussions and connections among peers. How do we present the good news of salvation and the teachings of the Christian Reformed Church to a generation that is enveloped by audio-visual technology and, more importantly, by a veritable avalanche of information that reflects a wide range of perspectives?

In *The Teaching Church*, Eugene Roehlkepartain (Abingdon Press, 1993) points out that church education is not merely about education; the church needs to place a greater emphasis on nurture in this environment. Church education, he says, involves more than learning Bible stories, doctrine, and all else that contributes to one's faith heritage. Roehlkepartain writes:

Effective Christian education involves people of mature faith nurturing others who are growing in faith. Such nurture includes caring relationships, meaningful conversations, working together in a variety of serving activities, sharing faith stories, and being with the larger faith community in worship and fellowship, as well as in many other activities.

Christian education must be viewed holistically not as a separate entity. Every aspect of a church's ministry contains educational implications. Basic principles of teaching and learning include: involving everyone in the process, being sensitive to needs of the participants, having a clear focus on what is to be communicated and accomplished, enabling participants to make connections between the subject matter and their own lives, providing opportunities to give expression to what they think and believe, and motivating them to put into practice what they believe. These principles are also relevant when planning for worship, even though worship should never be seen as an educational event. They are also appropriate considerations for conducting meetings of church groups, organizing a stewardship program, or planning a mission and outreach emphasis.

(pp. 11, 12)

B. Changes in the church

1. Church membership

The changes in our society have had a significant effect on the church. From denominational office statistics, it was learned that proportionately fewer young people are making profession of faith today. If one traces the number of infant baptisms in 1935 and then traces the professions of faith about 18 years later, the numbers are virtually equal. Historically, almost every baptism issued into an eventual profession of faith about 18 years later. However, beginning in the late twentieth century and continuing on to the present, that trend has changed drastically. For example, whereas

approximately 6,400 children were baptized in each of the years from 1982-1985 only about 3,700 young people have made profession of faith in each of the corresponding 18 later years. Some of this can be attributed to the loss of young members to other churches during the 1990s. It is also indicative, however, of the fact that about 40 percent of our young people are not making profession of faith and becoming adult members in the Christian Reformed Church.

Church membership has also changed because of external factors over the past generation. Because of a strong emphasis on outreach, we currently have thousands of members who have not grown up in the Christian Reformed Church. Many of them have not been exposed to our church school curriculum at a formative age or to challenging interaction around the dinner table and therefore lack the doctrinal foundations that are often assumed from members. It is difficult to expect that a single unified church school curriculum will satisfy the growing diversity of the CRC and its racially, ethnically, socially, educationally, and economically diverse membership.

2. Declining denominationalism

At the same time as the church has been working hard to enfold a diversity of new members, there has been a weakening in the “glue” that holds the denomination together. In the 1970s, the denominational office was considered the “head office;” the place where decisions were made and curricula produced. Today, the two denominational offices in Grand Rapids and Burlington have become resource centers for the 980 head offices where decisions are being made. Our churches have become more congregational; they pay less attention to what denominational church leaders say or to what agencies suggest. Church education leaders at the local level have opted for and benefited from materials and leadership training models beyond the CRC from such places as Saddleback, Willow Creek, Alpha, and so forth.

The CRC is not alone. Many denominations seem to be experiencing the same phenomenon: local churches opting for something different rather than the usual denominational fare. We hear countless stories about denominational curricula throughout North America that are developed and then remain on the shelves because they are simply not being used at the congregational level. Churches shop for something interesting, or different, or easy, with less regard for theological perspective. As a result of the recent lack of interest in things denominational, almost all church-related publishing houses have experienced a steep decline in sales and staffing and are returning to providing basic curriculum materials. CRC Publications has experienced those same dynamics. It has remained solvent because of its extensive sales to other denominations in addition to the CRC and the allocation of ministry shares to fund a new curriculum.

The committee is encouraged by the signs that point to a return to a willingness on the part of congregations to give denominationally developed resources a try. CRC Publications and the other related agencies do provide solid, relevant Reformed materials for the denomination and beyond.

3. Overseeing church education

The challenge to place these resources into the hands of those who provide nurture to the congregations is closely related to another change,

namely, knowing who is giving oversight to the church education program. Our survey indicates significant awareness by the elders of the church education material that is being used. Nevertheless other indicators show that there is only a cursory involvement in the educational ministries being carried out in their churches by those charged with this task. For instance, almost two-thirds of the church education classes are not visited regularly by council members and more than half of the churches have no faith nurture plan. Furthermore, there is little coordination among the various programs being offered within the same congregation. Few elders are involved in selecting or overseeing course content.

There are both delights and concerns over this lack of hands-on involvement. Councils are moving in the right direction when they delegate authority and oversight of their educational programs to others such as an education committee or a director of education. Such delegation requires, however, that those who have been empowered to act and decide on the choice of educational content are able to discern the strengths and weaknesses of those materials. This is not always the case. In fact, we have discovered that a significant number of educational and youth personnel have little or no Reformed training or background. Pastors and church councils need to ensure that adequate and sound teaching is offered to all congregation members and that these result in spiritual growth.

4. Increased leadership training

There has been a proliferation of training programs across the denomination since 1970. Although CRC Publications is the primary source of resources for faith nurture, it is not the sole source of training. Formal training opportunities have been developed by Home Missions, World Missions, GEMS, Cadets, Youth Unlimited, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Diaconal Ministries Canada, Christian Stewardship Services, and Firstfruits/Barnabas among others. Several of these agencies and organizations employ networks of teacher-leader trainers who operate at the regional or classical levels. A listing of CRC-related agencies and organizations that regularly offer leadership training is found in section II, D, Leadership training survey.

Significant leadership training is going on across North America for all ages. Because the committee is concerned about the faith nurture of our youth, mention must be made of the annual youth conventions and short-term mission programs where thousands of young people and young adults are taught, trained, and mentored in matters of the faith. These are frequently venues where young people indicate their first public profession of faith through life-transforming exposure to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, a number of regions are blessed through Day of Encouragement conferences where a wide range of training and teaching workshops meet the needs of hundreds of officebearers, teachers, leaders, and those involved in specialized ministries.

While there are wonderful examples of cooperation and coordination of training for various leaders by several church agencies and related organizations, the committee notes that much of this training takes place in isolation. These joint enterprises must continue, and agencies should work toward better integration of multiagency efforts.

5. Expansion of church education staff

Over the past decade or two, larger Christian Reformed congregations have increasingly hired paid staff to give leadership in the educational programming and children and youth ministries of the church. These fall into a wide variety of categories and job descriptions—ordained and nonordained.

Beginning in 2001, the office of evangelist was opened to all these positions. Synod 2003 changed the designation of evangelist and created a new term, *ministry associate*, to include almost all of these categories. Although this office is now available to variety of church staff, most have not sought ordination.

The yearbook database provides the following summary of staff positions at the congregational level as of March 2004.

Children's ministry	59
Congregational Life	22
Discipleship	8
Day care	12
Education/Child/Youth	13
Education/Evangelism	7
Education/Evangelism/Youth	7
Education/Youth	33
Education	15
Evangelism or Outreach/Youth	10
Youth/Music	3
Junior High	2
Preschool	1
Spiritual Formation/Life	3
Young Adults	1
Youth/Children	1
Youth	191
Youth/Young Adults	3
Total	391

Although the Christian Reformed Church has adopted character, knowledge, and skill standards for all congregational staff (*Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 702-4), it has done little to prescribe standards or compensation and benefit guidelines for church educators. As a result, churches have by and large developed their own job descriptions, skill set requirements, and requirements for further training (if any). That has led to a number of significant concerns:

- Poor working conditions for associate ministry staff.
- Staff who were not properly trained or equipped to do their work well.
- Unclear job descriptions with unrealistic expectations.
- High turnover rates.
- Serious conflict with other staff members, volunteers, and church members.

In the 1980s, a voluntary peer organization called the Christian Reformed Association of Staff Ministers (CRASM) was formed. This group, however,

was no longer able to sustain itself. Presently two fledgling associations of professional staff have emerged within the CRC.

The older of these is the Association of Reformed Youth Pastors (ARYP), which works in the broad areas of networking, conferencing, advanced education, credentialing, and advocacy for its members. ARYP strives to support professional youth pastors in the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America.

A related body, just over a year old, is the Association of Christian Reformed Church Educators (ACRE). This group desires to achieve similar goals for church educators as ARYP is working toward for youth pastors. Because job descriptions in many churches overlap in these areas, it is possible for a church professional to take up membership in both organizations.

Other denominations within the Reformed tradition are well ahead of our efforts to establish such associations. The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) enjoys a large, continent-wide membership and includes some CRC and RCA educators as associate members. APCE offers a highly effective annual conference, has developed an ambitious set of continuing education opportunities for professional credentialing, and is highly respected within the churches in advocating for church staff. The Reformed Church in America has its own association called Christian Educators, Reformed Church in America (CERCA). The RCA has also for many years had denominational and regional youth ministry staff and other support structures. There is much to learn from both of these organizations.

6. Worship

We would be remiss if we did not comment on the challenge of change in the area of worship. There is an increasing diversity in worship styles; a phenomenon unheard of a generation ago. A number of congregations are confronted with serious and often divisive issues surrounding worship style, some of which results in two morning worship services to accommodate traditional and contemporary styles.

The second service, generally held in the afternoon or evening, and usually a virtual photocopy of the traditional morning service, has come under increased pressure, especially throughout the 1990s and into the early part of this century. In most places, this has resulted in a rapid decline in attendance and in some instances even the demise of the second service. Synod recognized this concern in 1995 when it addressed the matter of having two worship services. On the one hand, synod affirmed "the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day." On the other hand it encouraged those congregations that "are exploring alternatives to the second service . . . to ensure that such alternatives are part of a strategic ministry plan with full accountability to their classis" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 766-67).

It is true that a number of churches have taken innovative approaches, such as making the second service more interactive, using discussion handouts, using video, replacing the sermon with increased Scripture readings and singing, as well as using a series of electives as part of the second service. Much more could be done to make the second service a teaching service. This teaching service could employ such means as small groups, house churches, and various congregational gatherings character-

ized by learning together, dialogue, and interaction to nurture the faith of the congregation. Not only do our historical roots assert that the second service was originally intended to be a teaching service (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 326-29), but the Church Order allows for such ways of gathering provided that it is done intentionally and responsibly. Movement in this direction will provide an excellent opportunity to bolster faith nurture for all ages in the church.

C. CRC Publication's response to the changing environment

1. Over the past number of years, the Christian Reformed Church, through the ministry of CRC Publications, has responded to the changing landscape within the denomination in the following ways:

- Reduced its product line, concentrating specifically on core areas where churches still look for resources, including education, worship, evangelism, and leadership.
- Increased the selection of offerings within these categories.
- Improved the flexibility of most resources to fit a variety of different settings, such as youth group, church education classes, and retreats.
- Tuned resources more specifically to a variety of emerging trends such as faith nurture, “contemporary” and “convergent” worship, and the spiritual growth movement.
- Increased the “leader friendliness” of leader guides to address time concerns of leaders and the inexperience of many new teachers.
- Undertaken a major revision of the *Friendship* curriculum for persons with mental impairments.
- Developed *Walk With Me*, a new curriculum for children and early teens.

2. CRC Publications is mandated by synod to “direct the denomination’s program of church education,” part of which consists of “developing and sponsoring workshops, conferences, and other program and services for information-sharing, training, and education of church officebearers, teachers, leaders, and members” (from CRC Publications’ mandate).

In this connection, CRC Publications had an office of training and consulting through which it supported a network of regional church education consultants. The consulting network provided local churches with teacher and leader training, individualized consulting, and program and resource information. These leaders acted as ambassadors for CRC resources and were instrumental in introducing curriculum products and other resources to congregations or classes as well as in supporting and encouraging local church school leaders and teachers. CRC Publications has also explored the church-support networks offered by the other agencies and found that none of them directly addressed the educational ministry of the church per se. That is not surprising because CRC Publications fulfilled that function until recently. They did find crossovers where, for example, Home Missions regional trainers offer support in small group development on the local level. Some promising collaboration was begun between the trainers and consultants from each agency; however, in 2002, because of a decreasing use of this network by churches and a

financial crisis in CRC Publications, the training office and the consultants' network were discontinued.

CRC Publications continues to provide a limited amount of training and consulting through the following means:

- Workshops for peer-led teacher training within the local church.
- Well-developed leader guides for many print resources.
- Telephone consultation by editors.
- Face-to-face consultation in a limited number of churches.
- Specific training related to introducing the new *Walk With Me* curriculum.
- Editor-led workshops at special events such as Days of Encouragement and at the annual convention of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators.

In its reports to the Board of Trustees and to synod, CRC Publications has made it clear that it is painfully aware of the fact that it is not sufficiently fulfilling its mandate by these means. It is for this reason that CRC Publications strongly endorsed the overture from Classis Alberta North that gave rise to our committee.

3. Most significantly, CRC Publications has recognized that the changes occurring both inside and outside the church necessitate periodically the development of a new children's curriculum. In the early 1990s, it introduced the *LiFE* (Living in Faith Everyday) curriculum in addition to the *Bible Way* curriculum, which at that time, had served the church for over two decades. *LiFE* provided a more intentional faith-nurturing pedagogy that encouraged teachers to model their own faith in the context of their teaching. In order to respond to the ever-increasing rate of change, CRC Publications has devoted considerable energy and time to develop a new curriculum, *Walk With Me*, which was available to the churches in time for the fall 2004 church season.

Walk With Me is being built on a blueprint that responds specifically to many of the current trends. Some of its features are:

- A strong biblical basis that is unabashedly Reformed in its presentation, interpretation, and application of Scripture and that is straightforward, concise, and relevant.
- Revised groupings that are pedagogically more sound than the traditional model (preschool, grades K-1, grades 2-3, grades 4-5, grades 6-8).
- An addition of two more years of early teen curriculum to address confusion and gaps resulting from the menu approach presently used in many churches.
- The incorporation in every lesson of *grow* and *show* goals as well as the *know* goal—reflecting an increased awareness of the importance of assurance and commitment as well as conviction as vital elements of true faith.
- Lessons that are leader-friendly, requiring less preparation time for time-stressed teachers.

- Pedagogy that is child-friendly (using a wide variety of learning styles), inclusive (actively promoting diversity), faith-nurturing, and community-building.
- Sessions that are not only rewarding but also fun, meeting the need for media-hyped students to be fully engaged in learning that presents the gospel for what it is—good news.

IV. A twenty-first century vision for faith nurture

A. *What is our vision?*

The committee recognizes that formal church education ministries form only a part of one's spiritual journey. One's faith walk is sprinkled with mentors along the way, such as parents, grandparents, ministers, friends, and teachers. It is molded by family and personal devotions as well as a wide range of experiences. Church education provides much of the formal teaching and learning. All of these elements together are used by the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, and move us along that spiritual journey. Church education, therefore, is seen as a significant but not exclusive part of faith nurture. As the committee began its work to determine the role of church education in a person's spiritual journey, it identified a number of statements that can be considered presuppositions or givens. These presuppositions form the bedrock upon which we build our walk with God.

- Faith nurture is a cradle-to-grave process.
- Parents need to possess a vital and living faith that they are called to model for their children.
- Teaching children about God forms the foundation of a lifelong spiritual journey.
- Faith nurture involves knowing, experiencing, and doing.
- Faith nurture is a communal effort. It does not happen in isolation.
- Mentoring and modeling are critical in faith nurture.
- A spiritually committed and Spirit-filled faith community will naturally pass on the faith—inwardly, upwardly, and outwardly—to children, youth, and new believers.
- Faith should be nurtured in a healthy combination of home life, school life, and church life.
- Churches need to affirm the priesthood of all believers, employing and empowering all believers in the life and ministry of the church.
- Churches need to continue to train and develop qualified church-school, children-youth, and adult-ministry leaders as faith nurturers.

In order to have a vision for the faith nurture of the church, we need to have a vision of the goal of faith nurture. Ephesians 4:13 provides such a vision: “until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

In envisioning our goals for the church's educational ministry, we continue to use some traditional language that is familiar to us, but we also use new terms to better capture the essence of our Reformed view of life and faith. We now use language such as *discipleship*, *spiritual formation*, *transformation*, and *faith nurture* where we used to refer simply to *church education*. We seek to

accomplish much more than merely fill minds with information; we seek to see lives and hearts transformed. That is the true essence of all that we seek to do.

To quote from the vision statement of the Integrated Children and Youth Ministry Team, “We envision a Spirit-filled growing body of Christ in which all people experience the reality of God, are nurtured in a dynamic relationship with the Lord and his people and are equipped and empowered to love, serve in, and witness to God’s Kingdom.” We must be disciplined and become disciples: people who are transformed by God’s Spirit. This is the essence of the Reformed faith.

There is no question that the church should instill and nurture a Reformed world-and-life perspective in our members, from children to the elderly. The question is: How do we best communicate and accomplish that? We must use relevant language. We must change our paradigm regarding learning, from one that focuses primarily on head knowledge and is time limited, to one that embraces all of the dimensions of spiritual formation and engages the whole person for his or her whole life.

B. Where does faith nurture happen?

In its formative research, the committee received a number of excellent papers from a variety of CRC sources. Dr. Syd Hielema, in a paper on Christian schools, reminded us that in the Christian Reformed community, faith nurture has traditionally taken place in three primary institutional settings: the home, the church, and the Christian school. The chemistry among these three has shifted significantly during the past generation. The Christian school has assumed much of the role of faith nurture that traditionally was the responsibility of the home and church.

- The church has suffered because of busyness in the home. Combine that busyness with a high level of mobility and brokenness in many people’s family lives, and you have a membership that is not as involved in or as loyal to local church programs. Many churches report a constant change in who regularly attends Sunday school. That makes continuity of church school curriculum difficult.
- Because of the busy and transient nature of church members, intentional training of teachers and leaders becomes more difficult.
- The Christian school, and especially the Christian high school, is broadening its approach to faith nurture. The structural nature of some school boards, however, and the ecumenical diversity among students and staff, no longer provide the guarantee that the school augments the Reformed perspective that is evident in the church and the home. Some Christian high schools now have small group ministries, service projects, mission trips, school chaplains, spiritual emphasis weeks, and school retreats. In addition, parachurch ministries such as Young Life and Youth for Christ are also finding a niche in some Christian high schools.

The Committee on Children at Risk is an independent, jointly sponsored initiative of the YMCA of the United States, Dartmouth Medical School, and the Institute for American Values. In their September 2003 report, a group of thirty-three pediatricians, research scientists, and mental health and youth service professionals stated that “the basic conclusion of [this] report is that children are hardwired for close connections to others and for moral and

spiritual meaning. The report challenges all of us to strengthen those groups in our society that promote this type of connectedness” (www.americanvalues.org/html/hardwired).

We affirm that the church, home, and school are vital groups in our society that promote such connectedness and make the following observations regarding each of these.

1. Christian school

The shift from home to school as the primary place where faith nurture occurs is not surprising for a variety of reasons. Students spend five days each week in school. The school is the most structured and most structure-able of the faith nurturing institutions. The trend throughout North America in the last generation is to expand the goals of education to encompass “the whole child”; thus, expanding faith nurture within the Christian school fits with this societal trend. While we can be thankful that the Christian school has been able to give so much when the home and the church are experiencing significant challenges, this shift to the school as the primary faith-nurturing institution raises a number of concerns and has, in fact, at times exacerbated the difficulties we face. Consider the following:

- The most intense faith nurture takes place in a classroom setting consisting of young people who are generally of similar age, maturity, and experience. This is not conducive to mentoring or sharing of one’s faith walk in an intergenerational setting. This can also create the illusion that this stage of life is not a stage at all but rather “the way faith is meant to be.” It is faith nurture without the broader context of the family or an intergenerational community of believers.
- The most intense faith nurture takes place in a setting of a terminal institution, i.e., an institution whose role in a person’s life comes to a clear and definite end after a number of years. In fact, the majority of our young people do not go on to attend a Christian college. Faith nurture does not occur only during one’s years of formal education; it is a lifelong journey. The church needs to be attentive to faith nurture of members at all levels.
- Even though some Christian high schools seem to be taking on a larger role in the faith nurture of its students, only about one-half of CRC children and teens attend Christian elementary and secondary schools and receive their primary nurture there while the other half rely on the home and church for their primary faith nurture. In a survey conducted for the Synodical Committee to Study Christian Day Schools, it was pointed out that, among CRC children in kindergarten through eighth grade, 63 percent in the United States and 67 percent in Canada attend Christian school. In ninth through twelfth grade, that number drops to 57 percent in the United States and 43 percent in Canada.

This poses a challenge for those involved in providing church education that is both relevant and challenging without repeating what is being taught at Christian schools but yet comprehensive enough for those who do not attend such schools and are also exposed to different belief systems when it comes to formal education.

2. The home

This report focuses on church education, but, because the church is made up of individuals and families, we also need to look at the relationship that exists between the home and the church. Our churches are only as strong and as vibrant as their members. Throughout Scripture, we see the important role of family—parents who are loving, nurturing, and training children in the knowledge and fear of God.

In Psalm 78:4, we read: “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done.” A 2003 Barna study reported that 85 percent of parents believe that they have primary responsibility for teaching their children about religious beliefs and spiritual matters. The following seven faith-sharing dynamics indicate how extremely important the home is in the faith maturation process of children and youth:

- A mother who models the faith.
 - A father who models the faith.
 - Regular dialogue with mother on faith-life issues.
 - Regular dialogue with father on faith-life issues.
 - A servanthood event or action of faith with a parent.
 - Regular reading of the Bible and devotions in the home.
 - Regular dialogue with an adult, other than a parent, on faith-life issues.
- (Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*,
[Winona, Minn.: St. Mary’s Press 2000], 97)

Research, nevertheless, has also shown that a majority of parents do not spend any time during a typical week discussing or studying religious matters with their children. This seriously jeopardizes a child’s faith nurture.

Despite the importance of the home in faith nurture, the following excerpt from The Barna Update identifies the situation in many churches today:

The survey data indicates that parents generally rely upon the church to do all the religious training their children will receive. Parents are not so much unwilling to provide more substantive training to their children as they are ill-equipped to do such work. According to the research, parents typically have no plan for the spiritual development of their children; do not consider it a priority, have little or no training in how to nurture a child’s faith, have no related standards or goals that they are seeking to satisfy, and experience no accountability for their efforts.

The situation represents an opportunity for churches to prepare parents for a more significant role in the spiritual development of their children. However, while churches offer classes and other programs for children, they do relatively little to equip parents to be effective spiritual guides. The survey found that only one out of every five parents of children under 13 has ever been personally contacted or spoken to by a church leader to discuss the parents’ involvement in the spiritual life and development of their youngsters.

(The Barna Update, May 6, 2003, www.barna.org)

Later in his report, Barna also indicates that sometimes parents are not able to guide their children spiritually because the parents are struggling with their own faith development. “When it comes to raising children to be spiritually mature, the adage, ‘you can’t give what you don’t have,’ is pertinent for millions of families.”

In the survey that this committee gave to high school seniors, the home was listed as the most influential place of faith nurture for one-third of the respondents. (twenty-four percent listed church, 14 percent listed school, and 19 percent listed other.) Parents promise in baptism, “in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in [their] . . . power to instruct these children in the Christian faith and to lead them by [their] . . . example into the life of Christian discipleship.”

Churches need to take seriously the task of equipping parents to be the spiritual leaders God has ordained them to be.

Parents set the schedule and pace of life for the home, and they sometimes allow their own and their children’s schedules to become overloaded with school and extracurricular activities. This often puts church-related and spiritual-growth opportunities in an as-time-allows position and robs children of opportunities for spiritual growth.

Parents need to be aware of the significance of their positions as role models for their children. It is common in CRCs today for parents to expect their children to attend church educational programs, but they pass up opportunities for spiritual growth themselves. This gives the message to children and youth that ongoing faith nurture is a low priority.

To say that parenting today is a challenge is an understatement. In a culture that is becoming increasingly anti-Christian, raising children and young people in the faith takes determination and intentionality. Churches have opportunities to both train and support parents through classes, workshops, and small groups. Often just bringing parents with similar concerns or interests (i.e., parents of teens) together for a series of meetings will build community among them and help them to know they are not alone in their struggles. As the Barna report suggests, churches do have an opportunity to help prepare and support parents in their important roles.

This can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- a. Adult education classes on family devotions, faith development, prayer, parenting, and marriage.
 - b. Intergenerational church school activities in which parents and children share in a faith nurturing experience.
 - c. Small groups in which parents who are encouraged and nurtured in their own personal relationship to God so that they will be better equipped to pass on matters of faith to the next generation.
 - d. Mentoring, in which experienced parents meet with younger, inexperienced parents to talk about the goals and the challenges of instructing children in the faith.
 - e. Capturing teachable moments throughout the day when parents can interact with and instruct their children about life issues.
3. The church

Historically, the church has been seen as a primary source of personal spiritual growth for children, youth, and adults. Our churches generally feel a great covenantal responsibility for the faith nurture of individuals until they publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ; then, we often assume that whatever further spiritual growth occurs will be through hearing the Word preached and whatever other nourishment they choose to find for themselves. Today there are other organizations that greatly influence

personal spirituality (i.e., Navigators, Promise Keepers, Alpha, Stephen's Ministries, Bible Study Fellowship, InterVarsity, and some megachurches with extensive training programs). The church needs to look seriously at cradle-to-grave faith nurture—training children and youth in the faith and equipping adults in their various spiritual roles as parents, as leaders in various children and youth programs, and as the leadership of congregations.

It is of vital importance that congregations examine and nurture their own spiritual vitality and that as a denomination we support, help, and equip churches to grow disciples of Jesus Christ of all ages. We are no longer a church that is made up of believers who have grown up in the church. We praise God that adults who have had little or no faith nurture in childhood are joining our church. We need to embrace them, not only by encouraging their membership in our congregations but also by walking together on a faith journey through small group participation, mentoring, Bible study, serving, and witnessing.

4. Conclusion

We assert the following:

- It is important for churches to promote strong Christian day schools.
- Schools must act as schools. Their primary focus is education. Therefore, they should be careful not to take over the activities that have historically belonged to the sphere of the church. Rather, they should actively promote the participation of their students in the ministry of their churches.
- Churches must take their roles seriously. They must equip leaders who can provide excellent faith nurture for the children and adults of the church.
- Families must take seriously the nurture of their children, ensuring that sports, work, and activities at school do not crowd out the significance of the faith nurture that occurs within the church and within the home.

The church is uniquely, historically, and divinely appointed and equipped to be the place of faith nurture from cradle to grave. While Christian schools—in some communities for some children and youth—may provide a significant and positive spiritual influence on students, it is a terminal institution, and its influence is limited to those who attend.

We conclude that the role of the church is critical because it ties all three elements together—church, school, and home. As churches support families and involve all ages fully, actively, and consciously in worship, nurture, leadership, ministry, and community life, God will bless and use them to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples who. . . .

C. *Supporting congregations in fulfilling their role in providing faith nurture*

While providing faith nurture remains the primary responsibility of each congregation, many CRC agencies, related agencies, and institutions should continue to provide support to the local church. That support, however, will require more intentional integration than it has in the past.

1. Role of CRC Publications

One of the tasks of the committee was to look at the mandate of CRC Publications as it relates to church education and to make recommendations for change if deemed necessary. In discussing this matter extensively with CRC Publications, the committee has reached a number of conclusions:

- CRC Publications must continue to fulfill the vital role it has had in the past by producing resources that will enable the church to “communicate the Reformed faith within the Christian Reformed Church and throughout the world” (from the CRC Publications’ mandate).
- The churches should require ongoing consulting and training for its discipleship and education ministry leaders.
- CRC Publications is best equipped and mandated to provide such consulting and training; it is directly involved with the development of discipleship resources.
- CRC Publications should not duplicate the efforts of other CRC agencies in discipleship and leadership training. It should collaborate with these agencies to ensure that the training and consulting provided by all of them is integrated and adequately supports the local church’s overall discipling efforts at all ages and levels of Christian maturity.
- CRC Publications should hire a qualified discipleship specialist to integrate the agencies’ discipling efforts; to provide regional training and consulting; to work with associations such as ARYP, ACRE, and APCE; and to advise CRC Publications with respect to product development.
- CRC Publications will need ministry-share support to fulfill this mandated responsibility.

The committee feels that CRC Publications needs to fulfill both roles; i.e., to continue to develop faith nurture resources but also to offer programmatic support in areas such as discipleship, teacher training, and curriculum consultation. The board of CRC Publications needs to look at the implications of that role as it considers future budgets.

2. Training teachers/leaders

a. Volunteers

Because holistic faith nurture requires competent leadership, it is the responsibility of every church council to ensure that volunteer leaders receive focused and regular training in faith modeling, pedagogy, Reformed worldview, doctrine, practice, and ecclesiology. Such training should be compulsory, and councils should budget for it. We value a high level of training for the minister; we should equally value such training for those who nurture our children, youth, and adults.

Many agencies support the local church in this important ministry. However, such training has often been piecemeal, disjointed, and lacking in intentionality. Consequently, few churches have developed an intentional training plan for the volunteer teachers and leaders.

We believe that a number of things can be done to better integrate leader training at the local level:

- As stated above, CRC Publications should take a more proactive role in consulting with the agencies and/or institutions that provide leader training with the goal of providing greater integration of their efforts.
- Classes should work with CRC Publications to provide regional trainers, promote training in the congregations, and regularly sponsor leadership training events.

b. Staff

The time may well come when appropriate credentialing of church educators should be made mandatory. While we do not believe that this is realistic in the present situation, we do believe that the denomination can do much to serve the churches by establishing focused and advanced training for CRC professional staff. By utilizing the best resources of CRC agencies and related institutions, we believe that an annual training institute could be designed that would provide courses in the following areas, among others:

- Reformed doctrine, confessions, and world-and-life view.
- Reformed ecclesiology and church order.
- Analysis of sociological and cultural trends.
- Pedagogy and communication.
- Applied training within program-specific areas such as GEMS, Cadets, Sunday school, and so forth.
- Spiritual formation and discipleship.

Such an institute could be offered annually for one or two weeks and contain introductory, intermediate, and advanced tracks to offer continuing educational enrichment for all levels. Eventually, a certain program of participation in such an institute (or its equivalent) could become mandatory for all church education professionals and youth pastors. Combined with a flourishing association of peers, such an institute would specifically address the substantial problems that we are presently encountering.

Many CRC-related educational institutions are already offering programs of study to equip church educators and youth pastors. However, for many local church staff, attending such intensive courses of study is simply not feasible. The institute would offer highly specialized training within a much more modest commitment of time and resources on the part of the professional or the local church.

3. Children and Youth Ministry Council

Synod 2001 adopted a strategic plan that placed ministry to children and youth as one of four principal strategic priorities. This led to the formation of the Integrated Children and Youth Ministry Team (ICYM) and the hiring of a coordinator for a one-year part-time trial period in 2003. In June of 2003, synod also approved the recommendation to dismiss the denominational Youth Ministry Committee and reformulated it with the ICYM as the Children and Youth Ministry Council (CYMC). This CYMC is made up of leaders from the related ministries including CRC Publications, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Home Missions, GEMS, Cadets, and Youth Unlimited. In addition, this council would seek the input of a broader-

based advisory council twice a year. The council has met regularly to work at integration and the working out of this vision in the churches.

From February 2003 through to October 2004, the coordinator of children and youth ministry was employed to work with a team to plan and lead eight regional conferences called Together: All God's People, with the threefold purpose of:

- Inspiring participants with a vision for effective integrated ministry.
- Enabling them to reflect how well their church is currently integrating children and youth into every area of church life.
- Empowering and equipping with the strategies, resources, and action plans to make it happen in their church communities.

She also served as a consultant for local churches; sought out integrated ministry models; encouraged cooperative, integrated efforts at all levels of the church life; led a pilot project with nine churches; and prepared evaluative tools, bibliographies, and other resources for those seeking to move toward a more integrated, intergenerational approach to children and youth ministry. The work continues with a monthly newsletter; consultation; the production of the guidebook; and the joint hosting of a training and/or conference event for children, youth, and educational ministry leaders.

These initiatives support and indicate the significant progress and effort that is already being made in the area of more effective, integrated approaches to faith nurture and the shift toward a more holistic approach to children and youth ministry. Such initiatives need to be continued and promoted further. This could be addressed through the establishment of a denominational discipleship specialist position.

4. Other initiatives

a. Classis youth ministry

Synod 2002 again strongly recommended the hiring of classical youth ministry coordinators to facilitate more effective children and youth ministries in their regions. Classes that have not already done so should heed this strong recommendation.

b. Church planters

Presently, there are several initiatives intended to help church planters fulfill their roles in providing faith nurture within their congregations. An interagency task force has this as an important part of its focus. Home Missions has begun to partner with CRC Publications to provide orientation for church planters by using the resources provided by CRC Publications and by exploring the way those resources can best be used in a developing church context.

c. Leadership development priority

The CRC in 2002 developed and adopted a Denominational Ministries Plan that contained among other things four ministry priorities. The leadership development priority reads as follows:

The vitality and growth of the church and its witness require the development of effective servant leaders—ordained and unordained, paid and volunteer—at all levels of church life. CRC agencies and institutions will cultivate, appoint, and train such leaders at home and abroad, including

an increasing number of leaders who are women and members of ethnic minorities, and ground them in a Christian understanding of vocation.

A cross-agency ministry team has been working on this priority, including writing a seminal paper articulating a CRC perspective on leadership in the Christian church today.

V. Conclusion

The committee identified a number of points that should be considered as being foundational to the church's approach to church education as faith nurture. Discipleship is a lifelong journey.

A. Transformational faith nurture is dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Therefore churches must earnestly seek God's presence, blessing, leading, and empowerment as they strive to fulfill their calling to make disciples until all have reached maturity.
- A spiritually committed and Spirit-filled faith community will pass on the faith—inwardly, upwardly, and outwardly—to children, youth, and new believers.

B. Transformational faith nurture takes place in the context of a spiritually committed and Spirit-filled faith community.

- Therefore, the church needs to affirm the priesthood of all believers and recognize, employ, and empower all of God's people.

C. Transformational faith nurture involves lifelong learning, experiencing, and doing.

- Therefore, churches must provide ongoing faith nurture opportunities for adults, youth, and children and urge and facilitate the participation of all.
- Using terms such as *faith nurture* and *discipleship* will help dispel the notion that one's faith grows only through one's exposure to formal curriculum.
- The second worship service is an ideal time to provide such nurture by employing models such as small groups, house churches, and various congregational gatherings characterized by learning together, dialogue, and interaction. Not only do our historical roots assert that the second service was originally intended to be a teaching service (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 326-29), but the Church Order allows it, provided that it is done intentionally and responsibly.

D. Transformational faith nurture requires leaders who are faithful and growing.

- Therefore, churches must be constantly raising up, supporting, and equipping leaders of all ages who are able to model, teach, and lead others on their faith journeys. The training of these leaders should be a priority.
- In addition, those who take the lead in faith nurturing must do more than apply traditional forms of instruction such as lecturing. Transformational faith nurture requires strong components of intergenerational modeling

and mentoring with the goal of helping believers become transformed into the likeness of Jesus. It must not only be knowledge- and activity-based but also character-based because our new identity in Christ is formed in us.

E. Transformational faith nurture goes beyond the work of the church. Faith should be nurtured in a healthy combination of home life, school life, and church life.

- Therefore, where available, churches should promote strong Christian day schools and work with (not in competition with) these institutions.
- Christian day schools must focus on their primary educational calling and be careful not to assume responsibilities that have historically belonged to the sphere of the church or home.
- The church must call and equip parents to nurture the faith of their children and youth in the home.

F. The two surveys suggest that children and young adults are being nurtured in the faith and are emerging from our programs with a reasonably solid biblical and doctrinal foundation. Most churches use CRC materials in the church school program. With the exception of the Coffee Break program, they then switch to non-CRC materials for their discipling ministries.

- Therefore, CRC Publications should be encouraged to develop and promote more discipleship materials for adults with suggestions for more systematic approaches to maturing faith.
- In addition, churches should give more attention to the faith nurture of their adults.

G. Transformational faith nurture has been diminished by separation and fragmentation in the programs and training provided by CRC agencies and related organizations.

- A number of agencies, organizations, and institutions provide a wide range of church education programs, curricula, and leadership trainers. There are potential areas of overlap as well as potential gaps in the kinds of resources that are available. Churches have access to a wide range of materials and trainers from a dozen agencies or institutions, but there is no centralized office or department to provide a knowledgeable overview of all that is available. In order for church education to be effective at the local level, more coordination is required at the denominational level.
- Therefore, the churches would benefit greatly from a qualified discipleship specialist who would assist agencies in integrating their support of our churches' discipling efforts and work toward more holistic, integrated, and cooperative approaches to faith nurture and discipleship.

H. Much of the denomination's numerical growth is coming in the form of new church plants. Some of these church planters lack educational exposure in a Reformed seminary as well as an intimate knowledge of Reformed educational resources. Because these men and women play integral roles in the spiritual development of new Christians and because it is the denomination's desire to promote a Reformed world-and-life view, it is essential that Home

Missions and CRC Publications become more intentionally involved in the training and preparation of these church planters.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Ms. Karen Wilk, secretary; Mr. Keith Knight, reporter; and Rev. Robert DeMoor, CRC Publications representative when the report is discussed.

B. That synod urgently remind the churches of their calling to provide faith nurture to all members (Church Order Articles 12, 63, and 64) and request classes to remind their church visitors to question churches specifically as to their fulfillment of this responsibility.

C. That the following question be added to Church Order Article 41: Does council diligently provide for the faith nurture of all its members?

Ground: This vital part of church life is absent from the current list of questions posed by classes to its church delegates.

D. That synod call the churches to make faith nurture a special focus throughout 2006 by:

1. Praying for the Holy Spirit's work of spiritual transformation, growth, and discipleship;
2. Placing special emphasis on building strong faith nurturing ministries for all ages, leading people to spiritual maturity, and raising up spiritual leaders; and that synod instruct CRC Publications to support and equip churches as they seek to carry out these recommendations.

Grounds:

1. The faith nurture of the church and all spiritual growth depends on the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. This clear calling in Scripture is a prerequisite for any spiritual growth. See for example Luke 11:9-13.
3. These recommendations support the initiative of Synod 2004 to grow healthy congregations.
4. These recommendations would serve the churches well as they prepare for the 150th anniversary celebration in 2007 under the theme Grace Through Every Generation.

E. That synod remind the churches that the second worship service may be a teaching service, employing models such as small groups, house churches, and various congregational gatherings characterized by learning together, dialogue, and interaction.

Grounds:

1. This is in keeping with the original intent of the second service.
2. This is in line with Church Order Article 51-a and its Supplement.
3. Churches that have experience with such models have testified to their effectiveness.

F. That synod ask CRC Publications to provide program support for the denomination's discipleship efforts for all ages by:

1. Establishing a position of discipleship specialist to assist CRC agencies, the CYMC, youth ministry organizations, and classical children and youth ministry personnel in integrating their discipleship programs and to serve as a discipleship consultant within the denomination.

Grounds:

- a. The many agencies involved in discipleship ministry at the denominational, classis, and congregational levels would benefit greatly from the enhanced networking opportunities and coordination of ministry that a specialist would offer.
 - b. This will enhance present efforts and processes that are working toward the integration of discipling ministries.
2. Submitting to Synod 2006 an implementation plan to offer high-quality teacher and leader training, conferencing, and consulting.

Grounds:

- a. More than one-half of the churches surveyed mentioned the need for further training.
 - b. This supports the original mandate of CRC Publications.
- G. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to initiate the development of an annual Institute of Discipleship that will train church leaders in areas such as Reformed interpretation of Scripture, Reformed theology, biblical worldview, faith nurture, current culture, and church programming. This should be developed in partnership with CRC-related agencies and institutions.

Grounds:

1. There is a demonstrated weakness in leadership development at the local level.
2. This will assist staff to meet synodically established requirements for church staff.
3. This is important for the ongoing ministry of our churches.

H. That synod encourage all professional church staff to become members of the Association of Reformed Youth Pastors and /or the Association of Christian Reformed Educators and to participate regularly in continuing education events.

Grounds:

1. This acknowledges the importance of a well-equipped ministry staff.
2. This assists ministry staff in meeting and maintaining the standards set by synod for all CRC ministry personnel (*Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 702-4).
3. This is consistent with the decision of Synod 2000 in urging all councils to permit, encourage, and fund the continuing professional education of all pastors and ministry staff (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 681).
4. The CRC through its Office of Pastor-Church Relations and the CRC Foundation has encouraged and assisted the establishment of these organizations.

I. That synod strongly encourage congregations to make supporting, nurturing, and equipping families, especially parents, a consistent and effective part of their discipleship ministries.

J. That synod dismiss the Committee to Study Church Education with thanks.

Committee to Study Church Education
Mary Bouwma, chairperson
Robert DeMoor
Eldean Kamp
Keith Knight, reporter
John Van Schepen
Karen Wilk, secretary
David Engelhard, ex officio

Appendix A

Final Survey Results of the Church Education Survey

I. Research procedure

The first draft of the survey questionnaire was constructed during June and July of 2002. In August, we did a pilot test by sending the questionnaire to eighteen selected churches. Those who received it were asked not only to complete it but also to suggest ways the questionnaire could be improved. We received five completed questionnaires back from the eighteen churches. Using their suggestions, we modified the questionnaire.

The final draft of the questionnaire was mailed the last week of October to all churches in the Christian Reformed Church. Postcards were mailed a couple of times urging the return of a completed questionnaire and informing the churches that a copy of the questionnaire was available at the CRC website.

Our targeted return rate was 50 percent, but this was not achieved. A total of 419 completed questionnaires have been returned—42.6 percent of the 983 churches that were mailed the questionnaire. Organized churches responded better than emerging churches. Only 17 or 11.3 percent of the 150 emerging churches returned the questionnaire. In comparison, 402 or 48.3 percent of the 833 organized churches returned the questionnaire.

The results in Table M1 show that, among the 419 churches from whom the data of this report are based, Canadian churches are slightly overrepresented and churches in the United States are slightly underrepresented, as determined by a comparison of the churches that returned the questionnaire to all those surveyed. Furthermore, emerging churches are significantly underrepresented, as are the smallest churches (with total membership of 150 or less).

Table M1: Comparison of all churches surveyed and churches that returned complete questionnaire based on three characteristics

Comparison Characteristics	Churches That Were Surveyed		Churches That Returned Questionnaire	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Location				
U.S.A.	758	77.1	296	70.6
Canada	225	22.9	123	29.4
Status				
Organized	833	84.7	402	95.9
Emerging	150	15.3	17	4.1
Size by total number of members				
1 – 150	382	38.9	82	19.6
151 – 300	220	22.4	111	26.5
301 – 600	275	28.0	159	37.9
601 or more	106	10.8	67	16.0
Total	983	100.0	419	100.0

Table M2 shows returns and return rates by classis. Return rates ranged from 0.0 percent, Pacific Hanmi, to 76.9 percent, Niagara. Eighteen of the 47 classes show a return rate of 50 percent or higher. As mentioned above, return rates were generally higher among organized than emerging churches. Twenty-eight of the 47 classes show a return rate of 50 percent or higher when only organized churches are considered.

Table M2: Response rates by classis

Classis	All Churches Surveyed	All Churches That Returned Questionnaire		Organized Churches Surveyed	Organized Churches That Returned Questionnaire	
	Count	Count	Percent	Count	Count	Percent
Alberta North	28	15	53.6	25	14	56.0
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	19	9	47.4	16	8	50.0
Arizona	11	2	18.2	8	2	25.0
Atlantic Northeast	18	10	55.6	14	9	64.3
British Columbia North-West	18	8	44.4	17	8	47.1
British Columbia South-East	22	11	50.0	17	9	52.9
California South	26	5	19.2	15	5	33.3
Central California	34	11	32.4	23	10	43.5
Chatham	27	16	59.3	26	16	61.5
Chicago South	20	10	50.0	18	9	50.0
Columbia	16	6	37.5	14	6	42.9
Eastern Canada	22	8	36.4	19	8	42.1
Georgetown	19	9	47.4	18	9	50.0
Grand Rapids East	16	9	56.3	15	9	60.0

Classis	All Churches Surveyed	All Churches That Returned Questionnaire		Organized Churches Surveyed	Organized Churches That Returned Questionnaire	
	Count	Count	Percent	Count	Count	Percent
Grand Rapids North	20	9	45.0	18	9	50.0
Grand Rapids South	21	10	47.6	17	10	58.8
Grandville	18	10	55.6	18	10	55.6
Greater Los Angeles	38	6	15.8	23	5	21.7
Hackensack	20	5	25.0	15	5	33.3
Hamilton	17	8	47.1	15	8	53.3
Heartland	18	8	44.4	15	8	53.3
Holland	33	19	57.6	28	16	57.1
Hudson	13	3	23.1	8	2	25.0
Huron	20	13	65.0	20	13	65.0
Iakota	22	7	31.8	20	7	35.0
Illiana	24	11	45.8	22	11	50.0
Kalamazoo	20	10	50.0	20	10	50.0
Lake Erie	23	10	43.5	19	10	52.6
Lake Superior	33	11	33.3	26	11	42.3
Minnkota	15	5	33.3	13	5	38.5
Muskegon	21	15	71.4	18	13	72.2
Niagara	13	10	76.9	13	10	76.9
Northcentral Iowa	14	8	57.1	14	8	57.1
Northern Illinois	19	8	42.1	15	6	40.0
Northern Michigan	16	4	25.0	15	4	26.7
Pacific Hanmi	19	0	0.0	17	0	0.0
Pacific Northwest	37	13	35.1	31	13	41.9
Pella	22	12	54.5	21	12	57.1
Quinte	18	11	61.1	18	11	61.1
Red Mesa	17	5	29.4	15	5	33.3
Rocky Mountain	27	11	40.7	23	10	43.5
Southeast U.S.	24	5	20.8	14	5	35.7
Thornapple Valley	12	7	58.3	11	7	63.6
Toronto	23	10	43.5	20	10	50.0
Wisconsin	19	11	57.9	18	11	61.1
Yellowstone	11	5	45.5	9	5	55.6
Zeeland	20	10	50.0	19	10	52.6
Total	983	419	42.6	833	402	48.3

II. Findings

A. Church education ministries

**Table 1: What church education ministries are offered in your church (Q1a)?
What types of materials are being used (Q1b)?
Are there people from outside your church (not baptized or professing members)
participating in the church education ministries offered in your church (Q2)?**

Church Education Ministry	Q1a % of all churches offering this Christian education ministry	Q1b % of churches using CRC Pubs materials (if ministry offered)	Q2 % of churches with people from outside the church participating in this CE ministry (if ministry offered)
Church school/ Sunday school:			
Preschool-Kindergarten	92	74	29
1st – 2nd grade	96	77	28
3rd – 4th grade	96	78	28
5th – 6th grade	88	78	24
7th – 8th grade	73	84	24
9th – 12th grade	69	87	23
Other programs:			
Children's worship	51	65	32
Little Lambs/Story Hour	45	94	68
GEMS	75	85	80
Cadets	72	82	74
Youth groups: 7th – 8th grade	52	32	57
Youth groups: 9th – 12th grade	78	38	60
Catechism	64	91	13
Preconfession class	57	64	24
College/career group	20	13	41
Small groups	58	55	34
Men's Bible study	51	63	31
Women's Bible study	60	54	34
Combined M/W Bible study	27	49	21
Coffee Break Ministry	55	91	76
Adult education class	58	47	30
New members class	42	47	48
Seniors group	28	43	16
Other (specify)	12	36	58
Other (specify)	4	19	44

Table 2: What percentage of members eligible for these ministries actually attends them (Q3)?

Church Education Ministry	% of churches by % of members eligible for this CE ministry actually attending (if ministry offered)			
	1%-33%	34%-66%	67%-100%	(n)
Church school/Sunday school:				
K – 6th grade	1	10	89	(406)
7th – 8th grade	2	14	84	(306)
9th – 12th grade	4	17	79	(288)
Other programs:				
Children's worship	3	13	84	(216)
Little Lambs/Story Hour	28	36	37	(163)
GEMS	2	17	81	(311)
Cadets	4	24	72	(298)
Youth groups: 7th – 8th grade	4	23	73	(222)
Youth groups: 9th – 12th grade	4	28	68	(324)
Catechism	4	15	82	(247)
Adult education (incl. small groups)	35	53	12	(315)

B. Ministries oversight

Table 3: Questions about ministries oversight (Q4)

Statement	% saying yes	% saying no	% saying yes & no or don't know	(n)
a. Do you regularly have a vision setting procedure for your education ministry?	38	62	*	(411)
b. Do you regularly evaluate the effectiveness of your education ministry?	66	33	1	(414)
c. Does your church have a faith nurture plan for children through adults?	40	58	2	(404)

* = less than 1.0%

Table 4: Who chooses the educational materials used in your church school/Sunday school program (Q5)?

Who chooses educational materials (Check as many as apply.)	% checked	% not checked	(n)
Minister(s)	45	55	(419)
Church council	16	85	(419)
Individual teachers	32	69	(419)
Church education committee	57	43	(419)
Director of education	35	65	(419)
Youth director/youth pastor	26	74	(419)
Other (specify)	23	77	(419)

**Table 5: Statements about church school/
Sunday school and ministry oversight (Q6)**

% saying Statement	% saying yes	% saying no	% saying yes & no	does not apply	(n)
a. Elders are aware of what church school/Sunday school curriculum materials are being used.	78	21	1	*	(410)
b. Council members visit church school/Sunday school classrooms at least once annually.	37	62	1	1	(409)
c. Council is represented on the church education committee.	80	16	0	4	(408)
d. The minister is involved in teaching church school/Sunday school/catechism classes.	73	25	*	3	(413)

* = less than 1.0%

Table 6: To what extent does your church coordinate the focus and lessons of its church school/Sunday school program with the other church programs serving children and youth (e.g., GEMS, Cadets, youth groups, etc.) (Q7)?

Extent of coordination (Check only one.)	%
Complete coordination	4
Some coordination but not complete	20
Occasional coordination	19
Little or no coordination	58
(n)	(404)

**Table 7: Within the past year, did your church school/
Sunday school teachers receive training (Q8)?**

Teachers received training?	%
Yes	33
No	67
(n)	(417)

Table 8: How frequently did training occur (Q8a)?

Frequency of training	%
Monthly	2
Every other month	5
Annually	64
Other (specify)	29
(n)	(133)

Table 9: From whom did they receive their training (Q8b)?

From whom received training (Check as many as apply.)	%
Church staff	58
CRC-sponsored events	28
Other (specify)	42
(n)	(134)

C. Teaching Reformed confessions

Table 10: At what grade level is the Heidelberg Catechism being taught (Q9)?

Level Heidelberg Catechism being taught (Check as many as apply.)	%
Not being taught	13
5th – 6th grade	17
7th – 8th grade	25
9th – 10th grade	72
11th – 12th grade	48
Other (specify)	3
(n)	(414)

Table 11: What method is being used in teaching the Heidelberg Catechism (Q9a)?

Method being used in teaching Heidelberg Catechism	%
Weekly class	83
Biweekly class	4
Retreat	1
Mentor program	1
Weekly class & retreat	*
Weekly class & small groups	*
Weekly class & mentor program	1
Biweekly class, mentor program, & monthly service project	*
Retreat & other	*
Weekly, retreat & other	*
Biweekly, retreat & mentor program	*
Weekly & other	1
Mentor program & other	*
Biweekly & other	*
Weekly & biweekly	1
Other (specify)	6
(n)	(361)

* = less than 1.0%

Table 12: What other expressions of the Reformed faith are being taught in your church education program (Q10)?

Other Reformed faith expressions being taught (Check as many as apply.)	%
Belgic Confession	38
Canons of Dort	17
Contemporary Testimony	22
Other (specify)	13
Not being taught	43
(n)	(386)

Table 13: In addition to teaching confessions in the church school program, how does your church communicate the Reformed faith to its members (Q11)?

How church communicates Reformed faith to its members—in addition to church school program
(Check as many as apply.)

	%
Catechism preaching	74
Other confessional preaching	55
Printed materials	31
Adult education class	43
New members classes	53
Preconfession class	67
Other (specify)	9
(n)	(407)

D. Discipleship

Table 14: What impact do the educational ministries have in your church (Q12)?
Scale: totally disagree (TD), somewhat disagree (SD), somewhat agree (SA), totally agree (TA)

Statement Most participants	Level of disagreement or agreement Percent					(n)
	TD	SD	SD & SA	SA	TA	
a. in educational ministries are being effectively disciplined.	2	12	1	66	20	(402)
b. are being challenged to share their faith/evangelize.	4	27	*	55	14	(404)
c. are being equipped to share their faith/evangelize.	5	34	1	51	8	(402)
d. are being challenged to develop their gifts.	2	19	1	58	21	(404)
e. are being equipped to use their gifts.	4	32	1	54	10	(398)
f. are gaining a basic understanding of Scripture.	*	4	0	49	47	(404)
g. are gaining a basic understanding of Reformed doctrine.	1	22	1	52	25	(404)
h. have the heart of God for others.	*	10	0	58	32	(400)
i. are developing their Christian leadership potential.	4	37	1	50	8	(403)

* = less than 1.0%

Table 15: Have you implemented a ministry for any of the following in your church (Q13)?

Statement	% saying yes	% saying no	% saying yes & no	(n)
a. Prayer	77	22	*	(406)
b. Mentoring	33	66	1	(394)
c. Spiritual growth retreats	32	67	1	(394)
d. Leadership development	39	60	1	(396)

* = less than 1.0%

E. Christian school attendance

Table 16: What percentage of the children in your congregation attend Christian schools (Q14)?

1. Churches in the United States

% of children in congregation attending Christian school	Grades K – 8th	Grades 9th – 12th
No children at these levels	1	2
None or 0% attend	6	14
1% – 24% attend	18	17
25% – 49% attend	15	11
50% – 74% attend	20	16
75% – 99% attend	37	37
100% attend	3	2
Estimated median average % attend (n)	63% (294)	57% (293)

2. Churches in Canada

% of children in congregation attending Christian school	Grades K – 8th	Grades 9th – 12th
No children at these levels	1	2
None or 0% attend	3	18
1% – 24% attend	10	18
25% – 49% attend	15	17
50% – 74% attend	31	23
75% – 99% attend	41	23
100% attend	0	0
Estimated median average % attend (n)	67% (122)	43% (120)

F. The CRC and church education ministries

Table 17: Do you use CRC Publications materials in many of your church education programs (Q15)?

Use CRC Pubs materials in many church education programs	%
Yes	87
No	13
(n)	(409)

Table 18: What factors influence your decisions about using CRC Publications materials (Q16)?

Factors influencing decisions about using CRC Pubs materials (Check as many as apply.)	%
---	----------

Cost	19
Ease of teaching	59
Relevance	61
Reformed emphasis	74
Balance of head and heart	42
Accessibility	45
Confidence in the material	69
Other (specify)	16
(n)	(414)

Table 19: How can the CRC agencies best serve you in your educational ministries (Q17)?

Ways CRC agencies can best serve (Check as many as apply.)	%
---	----------

Leadership training for volunteers	59
Training/certifying paid educational staff	11
Consultants	21
Annual convention	13
Regional training events	54
Published materials	68
Interactive website	41
Other (specify)	9
(n)	(395)

G. Contact information

Table 20: Name of person completing questionnaire provided (optional)

Name of person provided	%
Name given	75
No name given	25
(n)	(419)

Table 21: Position of person completing questionnaire (optional)

Name of person provided	%
Minister/pastor/senior or lead pastor/interim pastor/evangelist	30
Minister or youth/youth pastor	2
Minister of congregational life/cong. life pastor/minister of education	2
Director of education/education director (sometimes with other duties)	14
Director of youth/children & youth/youth ministry/children's ministry	4
Director of congregational life/cong. ministry/ministries/communication	3
Coordinator of education/education coordinator	2
Coordinator of youth ministry/children's ministries	1
Coordinator of congregational life/ministries coordinator	2
Education (youth education) committee/chair or member(s)	21
Council/chair or member(s)	1
Clerk/council clerk/church clerk	3
Elder(s)	8
Deacon(s)	1
Secretary/administrator/admin. assistant	4
Sunday school superintendent/church school superintendent or director	11
Other	3
(n)	(419)

Appendix B

Summary of Responses to Leadership Training Questionnaire

Ministry (info. provided)	GEMS	Friendship Can/USA
1. * No. of Trainers Engaged	25 plus one part-time training manager	9 trainers; in addition, director and board president and spouse do training, promotion and fundraising
2. Location of Trainers	Across the continent where concentration of clubs is higher	In 6 States (PA, SD, OH, NY, IN, FL, MI); no trainers in Canada
3. Kinds of Workshops or Seminars Presented	Trainers attend 3-4 new workshops each year for local training of counselors. Training also presented at conventions (list of workshops provided).	Determined by interest and skills. Some topics are combined. Training also occurs outside CRC (list of workshops is available on detailed response sheets).
4. Training of Trainers	3-day seminar in Grand Rapids once a year, also attended by area coordinators	Some have special D.D. degrees; director provides training
5. Funding	From overall GEMS budget and local workshops fees	By donors
6. Training Fees for Congregations	\$7 to \$35 for local workshops and approx. \$300 (US) for conventions for each counselor; some local congregations pay	Varies but some training is free; up to \$500 may be charged for all-day presentations and travel
7. Numbers Trained in Past Year	2,200 counselors attended the convention and/or local workshops	Workshops held at 10 conferences; much of the training is informal through personal contact
8. Planning and Organizing	2 local events are planned and organized each year	Training in response to requests and through invitation; leads for training from different organizations are acted upon
9. Measurement of Effectiveness	Attendees complete evaluation forms	Results such as groups started, materials used, and inclusion of disability ministry in curriculums at seminars
10. Follow up	Training manager maintains regular contact with leadership trainers and area coordinators	Phone calls, letters, e-mail, sample packets, videos, and meetings
Questionnaire completed by	Jan Boone	Nella Uitvlugt

Ministry (info. provided)	Youth Unlimited	Home Missions
1. * No. of Trainers Engaged	Currently 71 (list provided)	18
2. Location of Trainers	Across North America	Throughout United States and Canada
3. Kinds of Workshops or Seminars Presented	Compass 21 is a leadership development process. Training is conducted in different cities and at annual conventions (list of workshops provided).	Training relates to 9 topics for small groups and Coffee Break ministry (list of workshops is available on detailed response sheets).
4. Training of Trainers	Week-end sessions in Grand Rapids	Training done through HM personnel
5. Funding	From YU budget	From workshop fees and HM budget
6. Training Fees for Congregations	No charge and is funded by YU	\$25-\$35 (average) per attendee or charge per event
7. Numbers Trained in Past Year	Over 1000 trained by YU trainers	2,034
8. Planning and Organizing	Training events held to meet specific requests of congregations and/or congregations are invited	Training in response to requests and through invitation to events
9. Measurement of Effectiveness	Measured by number of participants, relationships, financial contributions, and ministry results	Workshops evaluations, sale of materials, and program implementation
10. Follow up	Post cards, gatherings, phone calls, and personal contacts while traveling in areas	Informal – no set process
Questionnaire completed by	Kel Blom	Marideen Holtrop

Ministry (info. provided)	Children & Worship	CSS Canada
1. * No. of Trainers Engaged	6	1.5 persons
2. Location of Trainers	Throughout United States; no CRC trainers in Canada	Ontario
3. Kinds of Workshops or Seminars Presented	Training deals with young children and worship	Growing in Giving, planned giving for churches, endowments & estate planning
4. Training of Trainers	At Western Seminary and by leaders in participating denominations	In-house and seminars
5. Funding	Churches pay a fee per attendee	From the operating budget
6. Training Fees for Congregations	\$80 per attendee	Ask congregations to cover expenses
7. Numbers Trained in Past Year	75	200 persons
8. Planning and Organizing	Training in response to requests and through invitation to events	Training in response to requests and through invitation to events
9. Measurement of Effectiveness	Number of churches using program	Surveys with participants and congregations on impact the seminars have made
10. Follow up	Mailing lists and notification of future events	Development process is ongoing
Questionnaire completed by	Lynn Setsma	Henry Eygenraam

Ministry (info. provided)	Calvin Inst. of Christian Worship	Deaconal Ministries (Can)
1. * No. of Trainers Engaged	7-10 CICW staff; many college and seminary faculty and local pastors	13 DMD; 3 regional trainers
2. Location of Trainers	Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary and local churches	Various Canadian classes
3. Kinds of Workshops or Seminars Presented	Varied – Symposium on Worship and Arts with 70 presenters; regional and congregational events covering topics such as Reformed worship, music, congregational life, leadership, change/renewal, global church, arts in worship, etc.	New deacons' orientation, Circle of Chairs, developing a work plan, Servant Leaders Guide, Days of Encouragement
4. Training of Trainers	Many have degrees in area of expertise and take continuing education	By staff of DMC
5. Funding	CICW budget, endowment grant funds	Deaconal conferences are charged \$200
6. Training Fees for Congregations	Varies depending upon event and local sponsorship	No charge
7. Numbers Trained in Past Year	1200 in CRC	Have no count
8. Planning and Organizing	Plan and invite as well as meet local requests for training	Usually the DMD sets a schedule in cooperation with local churches; Days of Encouragement planned by DMC
9. Measurement of Effectiveness	Evaluation forms, repeat attendance, and staff debriefings	Evaluations completed by participants
10. Follow up	Offering additional training and informing through e-mail and direct e-mail	Stage of development evaluation for deaconates; DOEs returning participants
Questionnaire completed by	Kathy Smith	Madeline Robins

Ministry (info. provided)	Cadets	Pastoral Relations
1. * No. of Trainers Engaged	1 training coordinator, 7 RTCs, 107 DEC's	2 persons
2. Location of Trainers	Throughout United States and Canada	Grand Rapids and Stevensville, MI
3. Kinds of Workshops or Seminars Presented	Trained to meet the needs of clubs and then to develop and present specific workshops to meet those needs	Conflict as Opportunity, Healthy Congregations, Team Building
4. Training of Trainers	3 phases: Thursday-Saturday in Grand Rapids	Lombard Mennonite Peace Center
5. Funding	Through council fees and from operating budget	Pastoral Church Relations
6. Training Fees for Congregations		Charge for materials
7. Numbers Trained in Past Year	NA	75-100
8. Planning and Organizing	Not applicable	Mostly invited
9. Measurement of Effectiveness	Evaluations by counselors and cadets	Verbal feedback
10. Follow up	Continual communication between TC, RTSs, and DCE team leader of each council	Phone call or refresher training
Questionnaire completed by	Dick Broene	Norm Thomasma

Ministry (info. provided)	First Fruits Ministry Division of Barnabas Foundation	
1. * No. of Trainers Engaged	3 persons	
2. Location of Trainers	Chicago, West Michigan, NW Ohio	
3. Kinds of Workshops or Seminars Presented	Work directly with CRC churches to help them make biblical stewardship a core value of their church; program called Good Stewardship Ministry and Church commits to program for 3 years	
4. Training of Trainers	Trained in-house; Barnabas Foundation, Chicago; and includes intense field training	
5. Funding	Barnabas foundation commits \$200,000 to the program	
6. Training Fees for Congregations	Churches are charged on the basis of their size	
7. Numbers Trained in Past Year	In 2003, 20 churches participated in GSM; over 150 CRC churches in contact with the ministry regarding stewardship issues	
8. Planning and Organizing	Planned events as well as local requests for training.	
9. Measurement of Effectiveness	GSM churches set goals in the use of talent and resources	
10. Follow up	Phone, e-mail, and in person; very set agenda is used.	
Questionnaire completed by	Norm VanderWel	

* Numbers for above info corresponds to these survey questions.

1. How many trainers/seminar leaders does your program currently engage?
2. Where are these persons located?
3. What kinds of workshops/seminars are presented? (Give titles if you have them.)
4. How are the trainers trained?
5. How is this training funded?
6. What do you charge for the training of leaders within congregations?
7. How many people were trained in congregational leadership this past year?
8. Do you plan events and invite local churches, or do you wait until the local church requests training?
9. How do you measure the effectiveness of your training?
10. How do you follow up on your training?

Outline for report

I. Introduction

- A. *The old dump truck*
- B. *The committee mandate*

II. A criminal justice crisis and the restorative justice response

- A. *What's gone wrong—a criminal justice crisis*
- B. *The development of the present criminal justice system*
- C. *Restorative justice: What it is and where it came from*
- D. *The restorative justice philosophy*
 - 1. What are the key questions for each approach?
 - 2. Who is the victim?
 - 3. How are offenders asked to take responsibility?
 - 4. What are the roles and relationships of punishment and accountability in criminal justice?
 - 5. Are the causes of crime addressed?
 - 6. Is the present system fair?
 - 7. Does the system restore offenders back into their communities?
 - 8. Does the system encourage healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness?
 - 9. Why is the restorative justice model used so rarely in criminal cases?

III. Biblical principles of justice

- A. *The deep grammar of justice*
 - 1. Justice is about relationships
 - 2. Justice is broken
 - 3. Justice does not pass over wrongs
 - 4. Governments are called to uphold justice
 - 5. The community of Christ is called to a prophetic role
- B. *The story of restoration*
 - 1. Restoration brings a new and better justice
 - 2. Restoration is the story of God
 - 3. Restoration can be our story
 - 4. Governments are called to restoration
 - 5. The Christian community is called to restoration

IV. Principles and conclusions

- A. *Justice principles*
- B. *An affirmation of the restorative justice movement*
- C. *What churches can do*

V. Recommendations

Appendix: Resources re Restorative Justice Issues

I. Introduction

- A. *The old dump truck*

They were two boys doing what boys love to do—exploring the neighborhood and testing their powers against each other—when one of them spotted an old dump truck in the weeds. Without thinking, first one, then the other,

reached down, picked up a rock, and threw it against the truck. The windshield of the old truck broke with a satisfying crash. The boys ran home, guilty, but undiscovered. Or so they thought. It was not long before a sheriff's car pulled up at a house. The boy, faced with the accusation, soon admitted his and his friend's guilt. Now what? Arrest? Trial? A sentence and a record?

This is the point at which the story turns. With the boys facing the threat of criminal justice proceedings, a decision was reached among those involved to try to handle the situation among neighbors. The parents contacted the owner of the truck and made arrangements for the boys to do yard work in restitution for the broken windshield. No charges were filed. No criminal record was established. The situation was resolved—the boys learning something about the value of other people's property and the neighbor receiving both an admission of guilt from the boys and restitution for what he had lost. Justice was done. The neighbor was restored to equanimity or, if we use the biblical word, *shalom*.

The details of this little story, told to us by a member of our committee, became for us a simple way to sum up the fundamental principles of restorative justice.

1. The story assumes that justice—we will say more about what this means—exists and that justice was violated when the boys broke the windshield of the old dump truck. In what is to follow, we take seriously both the existence of justice and the need to address violations of justice. Restorative justice is neither denying justice nor overlooking violations.
2. Further, the little story recognizes the proper role of governmental authorities in addressing justice violations. The threat of official sanctions against the boys was an important ingredient in the outcome of the incident. The outcome of the incident was monitored by the authorities. If the outcome had not been satisfactory to all concerned, the authorities had the right to step in.
3. The story also brings up the possibility of alternative processes. If the sheriff's deputy had refused to allow the parents and the boys to attempt to reconcile with the neighbor, the incident would have been processed through the criminal justice system. In this case, restorative justice represents a broadening of criminal justice practice.
4. Another key element in the story is that the boys—the offenders—took responsibility for their actions. Without accountability there can be no true restoration.
5. The victim also has a role here. His claims were vindicated and his losses restored. In restorative justice, victims are heard and their losses are addressed.
6. Finally, the story involves not only the victim and the offenders but also the community in the process of healing. A restorative justice process is not complete until the offenders, as well as the victims, are restored to community. Although it is often unattainable, reconciliation is a goal of the restorative justice process.

A couple of boys throwing rocks at an abandoned truck is a far-too-easy example, of course. Such matters can and often are handled informally, but, can the principles discerned in this small example serve in more difficult cases where the stakes are far higher? Can it work in places where there is little community and where family structures have broken down? Is there a place within the criminal justice systems of our two nations for restorative justice? Is there a larger place than presently exists? Should the church support the practice of restorative justice not only in the criminal justice setting but also within other institutions, including churches and Christian schools? Is restorative justice more biblical than the usual forms of justice practiced in our communities and nations? It is these and related questions that we seek to answer in the following pages.

B. The committee mandate

Synod asked us to address these questions in response to an overture brought by Classis B.C. North-West (*Agenda of Synod 2003*, pp. 401-22). The overture included a study of restorative justice and a set of recommendations. Synod 2003 was favorably inclined toward this overture but believed that it required clarification and amplification at key points. Specifically, synod mandated our committee to:

1. Identify and articulate the biblical basis for the administration of justice, particularly the distinction and interaction between retributive and restorative justice.
2. Consider the present United States and Canadian criminal justice systems and assess both, clearly describing the urgency of the present situation and giving examples of successful interventions and outcomes of restorative justice. Other applications to consider include situations of restorative justice in the home, school, and church.
3. Recommend ways for the church and its members to learn and implement these biblical justice principles.
4. . . . Make every effort to submit to the churches, by the spring of 2004, a draft copy of the report, inviting response for the committee's consideration.
5. Report to Synod 2005.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 618)

These are large tasks. The amount of written and other material related to the various parts of our mandate is vast. What we will try to do in these pages is provide a lens through which to see and understand these materials. Our report will fall into five main sections. In the first section, we will look at a perceived crisis in our criminal justice systems and how the restorative justice movement seeks to address this crisis. The second section will ask the question at the heart of our mandate: In the light of biblical and Christian principles, how persuasive is the approach taken by the restorative justice movement? Should Christians become involved in various restorative justice efforts to critique and reform our present criminal justice systems? The third major section of the report will draw together our conclusions and offer a set of justice principles. The report proper will conclude with a set of recommendations for synodical action. An appendix will offer resources for further study and action.

II. A criminal justice crisis and the restorative justice response

A. *What's gone wrong—a criminal justice crisis*

Simply citing statistics is one way to get at what is widely perceived to be a crisis in our criminal justice systems. Consider these statistics that offer a perspective on one part of the problem—the burgeoning correctional system in the United States:

1. In the United States, there are presently more than two million people in the nation's prison system—more than six times as many as were imprisoned just thirty years ago.
2. The United States imprisons people at the rate of about 700 for every 100,000 people. This compares with 40 per 100,000 in Japan, 95 per 100,000 in Germany, 110 per 100,000 in Canada, 400 per 100,000 in South Africa, and 645 per 100,000 in Russia.
3. Having only 5 percent of the world's population, the United States accounts for 25 percent of its prisoners.
4. If recent incarceration rates remain unchanged, an estimated 6.6 percent (1 in 15 persons) will serve time during their lifetimes.
5. Nearly two-thirds of the people entering prison have been there at least once before.
6. The rate of incarceration for white men is 681 per 100,000; for black men, 4,834 per 100,000; and for Hispanic men, 1,778 per 100,000.
7. Twenty-eight percent of black men will be sent to jail in their lifetimes.
8. Since 1980, the number of women in prison has increased at nearly double the rate of men.
9. This year alone, more than 600,000 persons will be released from the nation's prisons—more than the populations of cities such as Seattle and Boston.

Note: For these and other statistics on incarceration in the United States, see the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics website: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/.

For Canada, the statistics are less dramatic but show some of the same trends. From 1989 to 1995, the number of persons incarcerated in Canada grew dramatically (although at rates consistently below those of the United States). Since that time, the number has leveled off and declined slightly (for these and other statistics see www.statcan.ca/ and <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~wcjlen/WCJ/stats/canada.html>). If one looks below the surface of these statistics, one finds the same kind of racial imbalances that are evident in the U.S. statistics. For the federal prison system, 15 percent of the population is Native, while the Native population represents just 2.8 percent of the population of the nation as a whole. If one groups together the Prairie Provinces, Northwest Territories, and Northwest Ontario, the figure for the Native prison population jumps to 44 percent. There are many other issues as well. While restorative justice approaches are mandated, the will and means to implement

them are often lacking. Correctional investigators point to problems with overcrowding and health issues. There has been a steady increase of nonsentenced people held in often unhealthy, overcrowded remand centers.

Along with these numbers come enormous costs—in dollars, in lost productivity, and most importantly, in lost lives. However, the numbers by themselves do not tell the whole story. A recent book by David Garland (2001) chronicles a major shift in the attitudes toward, and practices of, criminal justice in the last thirty years. Among the indices that he lists as indications of this shift are the decline of rehabilitation as an underlying ideal for prisons in particular and the criminal justice system in general, the reemergence in public discourse of retribution as the principal aim of criminal justice, a change in the emotional tone of crime policy, an emphasis on the fear of crime, the emergent role of victims in sentencing, a stress on public safety as a goal of the criminal justice system, and the politicization of criminal justice policy.

The point here is not whether any or all of these shifts are, in themselves, good or bad, but that these changes in attitude have changed the way that criminal justice is practiced—especially in the United States but also in many other countries, including Canada. They—the attitudes—have led to some of the statistics that we cited above: more people incarcerated with longer sentences, more emphasis on punishment for punishment's sake, and deeper divisions within our societies over the fairness of the criminal justice system. As a result of these and other developments, questions increasingly are being raised about the directions our societies have taken toward criminal justice, about the human and financial costs of the current systems, about the effectiveness of the systems in achieving their goals, and about the justice of these systems in general.

At this level—the level of statistics and social analysis—we might be able to argue the pros and cons of the present systems. The arguments change, however, when we come to realize that every number is a story and every story is the story of a person, a child of God. These are often tragic stories, stories of abuse, of chemical dependencies, of bad choices, and of a hundred other human causes that catch up whole communities in webs of crime and poverty. These are lost lives, lives that are lived in a cycle of short-lived freedom and long incarceration. They are the forgotten, the underclass, the ragged remnants of rich societies. They and their victims are locked together in these dysfunctional systems. No one need look far to see that the present systems do not work well, especially for the minorities of our nations. So, we might ask, how did we come to this point?

B. The development of the present criminal justice system

Recent developments in the criminal justice systems of Western societies—increased incarceration, less judicial discretion, the establishment of a criminal class, and so forth—are part of a longer history in our societies. The present systems developed largely out of the social reforms of the eighteenth century. This is not the place to detail those reforms and their effect on the way that criminal justice has been practiced, but for our purposes, three shifts that occurred during the Enlightenment period are relevant for our later discussion of restorative justice.

The first was a shift from the law of the king to the codified law systems that we now have. This shift had the merit of reducing the arbitrariness of

punishment, but it did so at the cost of making criminal systems objective in character. The ownership of the criminal justice processes moved from community to state; the contest moved from offender versus the victim to offender versus the state or crown. An emphasis was put on keeping the personal—including the grief and anger of the victim—out of the system. This remains true today. Separate entities investigate the crime, judge it, and carry out the sentence. No one person is responsible for the overall process, which allows for and promotes a certain distance from the effects of the system on offenders and victims alike. Each person just does his or her job.

The second was a shift from a variety of public punishments that were often cruel and painful to imprisonment as the punishment of choice. Imprisonment had long been used by the authorities to detain people, often arbitrarily and for political reasons, but it had not been thought of as punishment. In the late eighteenth century, authorities began to use imprisonment as the punishment itself. It fit the new codified law perfectly: It could be graded for severity in terms both of the time spent in the prison and of what happened inside the walls—tough time or easy time. It seemed, initially, far more humane than the punishments then being used.

The third shift, concomitant with the shift to imprisonment as the punishment of choice, was a shift in the goals of punishment. Instead of punishment as retribution or punishment as public example, the eighteenth-century reformers held up the ideal of punishment as correction. Just how that correction was to happen was a matter of considerable discussion. One of the earliest experiments, in Philadelphia, adopted a monastic ideal: a discipline of penitence practiced in a solitary cell. The contrasting Auburn model tried to establish a prison society, strictly regulated, in which the prisoners would learn social values.

The problem has been that, in fact, neither model has worked or worked well. Michel Foucault (1979) points out that from the very beginning criticism has been mounted against prisons, and this criticism has been repeated ever since. The following points are always made:

1. A relationship between the crime rate and imprisonment is difficult to establish. Recently, for example, rates of imprisonment have continued to rise while the crime rate has been falling.
2. Prisons seem to foster recidivism. Statistics show that roughly two-thirds of those entering the prison system have been there before.
3. Prisons reinforce the sorts of behaviors that lead to delinquency outside of the prison.
4. Prisons allow the formation of criminal relationships. People meet future collaborators in crime inside the walls of the prison and learn of criminal possibilities there.
5. Reentering society after a stay in prison is very difficult. The stigma of imprisonment makes it more difficult for offenders who have served their sentences to find employment and establish a life within the rules of society.
6. Imprisonment often leads to the impoverishment and even the destruction of the criminal's family by removing from the family its principal source of income and by separating the members of the family for long periods of

time. In this way imprisonment becomes a punishment not only for the offender but also for the whole family.

The point is not whether each or all of these elements of the critique of prisons can be debated or addressed with measures intended to mitigate their effects. The point is that these arguments have been made about prison culture for two hundred years. They keep arising because imprisonment tends to produce the same results. Foucault points out that the response to these criticisms is also predictable. It leans to one of two forms: prison reform, which attempts to address the problems by making the prison more rehabilitative, or a call for increased severity of punishment, which leads to tougher and longer time for those imprisoned.

We have clearly been in an era in which the latter emphasis has been paramount. We have heard the calls for tougher and more time for prisoners for thirty years. The result has been the huge run up of prison construction, longer sentences, fewer prison programs, and many more people held in prison. Whether these changes promote justice and enhance public safety has and will continue to be debated. Our task is not to settle the debate but to ask whether some of the goals of our societies may not be better met by changing our perspective on and, in some cases, our approaches to criminal justice. It is just such a challenge to our present systems that the restorative justice movement presents.

C. Restorative justice: What it is and where it came from

Restorative justice arises out of the critique of, and a need for, an alternative to the dominant criminal justice systems in our and other countries. The response of the restorative justice movement has two parts. One is a philosophical critique of current criminal justice practice, outlined in, for example, the books of Howard Zehr (1995, 2002), Christopher Marshall (2001), and John W. De Gruchy (2003). The second is a variety of concrete criminal justice initiatives, such as Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP), sentencing circles, and family group conferencing (more on these later).

The modern restorative justice movement arose in the 1970s—about the same time that the current build-up of prison population began. It arose, in part, from Christian, especially Mennonite, roots. Howard Zehr (1995, 158), himself a Mennonite, describes the informal beginnings of the movement:

On May 28, 1974, two young men from Elmira, Ontario, pleaded guilty to vandalizing 22 properties. No one could have guessed that their cases would lead to a movement with international dimensions.

Several days earlier a group of Christians had met to talk about a Christian response to shoplifting. The Elmira case had been widely publicized and so came up in the discussion. Probation officer Mark Yantzi, whose responsibility it was to prepare the pre-sentence report in the case, was present. "Wouldn't it be neat," he dreamed, "for these offenders to meet the victims?"

After a discussion, the idea was proposed to the judge, who initially turned it down, but when the time for sentencing came, the judge, to the surprise of all, ordered precisely what this small group of Christians had proposed: face-to-face meetings between victim and offender. Out of this small beginning, the VORP movement was born. Zehr (1995, 161) describes the VORP concept in the following way:

[The] VORP process consists of a face-to-face encounter between victim and offender in cases which have entered the criminal justice process and the offender has admitted the offense. In these meetings, emphasis is upon three elements: facts, feelings, and agreements. The meeting is facilitated and chaired by a trained mediator, preferably a community volunteer.

Along with the VORP movement (now sometimes known as Victim-Offender Mediation or VOM), pioneered in Ontario and Indiana, came initiatives from traditional societies who wished to go back to earlier, remembered, forms of justice. Prominent among these were the Maori of New Zealand, who felt that modern approaches to justice were destroying their young people. Drawing from their Maori aboriginal traditions and Christian beliefs, the Maori developed family group conferencing as an alternative way to resolve community conflict and crime. Family group conferencing includes the offender, the victim, community members affected by the crime, and a facilitator in meetings designed to lead to outcomes that satisfy all the parties. The New Zealand model, in turn, was transported to Australia where the police developed the model further. This model was introduced to the United States by Ted Wachtel of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, through conferences and his book, *Real Justice*.

Thus, the movement has spread in a variety of ways, both formally and informally. In Canada, restorative justice efforts have had the support of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In addition, renewed interest (1970s-1990s) among the aboriginal First Nations people in Northwest Canada led to federal legislation (719.2[e] Part XXII, Criminal Code of Canada) that mandated restorative practices such as sentencing circles; community reintegration; and restitution and reconciliation programs, under which prison sentences are to be used only as a last resort. In 1996, restorative justice practices were recognized by federal and provincial ministers of justice. In early 2004, the Department of Justice Canada issued two important documents: "Values and Principles of Restorative Justice in Criminal Matters" and "Restorative Justice Program Guidelines." The former document was released "to further dialogue on the development for a national consensus on fundamental values and principles and a consistent framework for the use of Restorative Justice in Criminal Matters." The second document outlines best practices. Increasingly, schools in Western Canada are operated by restorative justice principles and practices.

In the United States, restorative justice practices have been recognized officially by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) under the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model (see the website for OJJDP at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/> and for the University of Minnesota Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking at <http://ssw.che.umn.edu>). In addition, many states and municipalities have begun to employ restorative justice approaches, especially in the area of juvenile justice. For an overview of these efforts, see the University of Minnesota Center for Restorative Justice website, cited above, which includes an extensive bibliography and links to other restorative justice sites.

Recently, a large restorative justice initiative has been undertaken in the United Kingdom. Under the signature of Home Secretary David Blunkett, the government released, in July 2003, a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of restorative justice practices in a consultation document entitled

Restorative Justice: The Government's Strategy. The secretary names three important elements of restorative justice practice:

The Government is committed to placing victims' needs at the centre of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). We also want a system that encourages responsibility, so that offenders face up to what they've done, and make amends. And we want the wider community to be involved in finding positive solutions to crime and anti-social behavior (p. 4).

He goes on to say that he believes that "restorative justice can help us deliver a CJS like this" (p. 4).

Along with these official responses to the restorative justice movement, a variety of advocacy groups have adopted restorative justice perspectives, including Prison Fellowship through its Justice Fellowship (www.pfm.org/justicetemplate.cfm), the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, a multid denominational group to which the CRC belongs (www.ccjc.ca/main.cfm), the Center for Public Justice (www.cpublicjustice.org), and our own denominational justice office (www.crcjustice.org). More on these groups is found in the resources appendix.

D. The restorative justice philosophy

So what holds these various and somewhat disparate practices and groups together? What is the underlying philosophy of restorative justice? Howard Zehr (1995, 2002) has often served as a spokesperson for the movement, and we will be drawing upon his work and those of others. Zehr (2002, 37) describes restorative justice as "a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible."

In the past, those describing restorative justice have often set side by side two justice paradigms, naming one *retributive* and the other *restorative*. This is unfortunate for several reasons. First, it suggests that there is no place for retribution in a justice system. As we will develop shortly, biblical principles of justice do include the idea of retribution. Second, although the words *retributive* and *retribution* often have the connotation of vengeance in our culture, vengeance is not inherent in the concept of retribution. Third, such a distinction may be polarizing and misleading. Zehr (2002, 58) states:

In my earlier writings, I often drew a sharp contrast between the retributive framework of the legal or criminal justice system and a more restorative justice approach to justice. More recently, however, I have come to believe that this polarization may be somewhat misleading. Although charts [often featured in earlier books on restorative justice] that highlight contrasting characteristics illuminate some important elements differentiating the two approaches, they also mislead and hide important similarities and areas of collaboration.

Zehr (2002, 58-59) summarizes the similarities and differences well when he states:

Philosopher of law Conrad Brunk (2001, 31-56) has argued that on the theoretical or philosophical level, retribution and restoration are not the polar opposites that we often assume. In fact, they have much in common. A primary goal of both retributive theory and restorative theory is to vindicate by reciprocity, by evening the score. Where they differ is in what each suggests will effectively right the balance.

Both retributive and restorative theories of justice acknowledge a basic moral intuition that a balance has been thrown off by a wrongdoing. Consequently, the victim deserves something and the offender owes something. Both approaches argue that there must be a proportional relationship between the act and the response. They differ, however, on the currency that will fulfill the obligations and right the balance. Retributive theory believes that pain will vindicate, but in practice that is often counterproductive for both victim and offender. Restorative justice theory, on the other hand, argues that what truly vindicates is acknowledgment of victims' harms and needs, combined with an active effort to encourage offenders to take responsibility, make right the wrongs, and address the causes of their behavior. By addressing this need for vindication in a positive way, restorative justice has the potential to affirm both victim and offender and to help them transform their lives.

Rather than contrasting restorative justice with retributive justice, it may be more helpful to contrast the restorative justice approach with the current criminal justice systems—themselves a mixture of philosophies and approaches. It is in answer to the following questions that the differences between restorative justice and our current systems emerge.

1. What are the key questions for each approach?

The current criminal justice system focuses on the questions, What laws have been broken? Who did it? What do they deserve? Too narrow a concentration on these questions can result in a narrowing of the legal process to technical issues, which miss the reasons for the law in the first place—the harms done to victims, to communities, and even to offenders. By focusing on the actual harms done—on such questions as: Who has been hurt? What are their needs? Whose obligations are these? How can the processes of justice include all those who have been affected by the crime, whatever their involvement?—the restorative approach keeps justice tied to people and relationships, to damage done to these people and relationships, and to the sorts of obligations thereby created.

2. Who is the victim?

This is a key question for the restorative approach to justice. The current criminal justice system often distances the victim and the immediate community from justice proceedings by defining cases in terms of the offender versus the state or crown. The result too often is that victims are all but ignored. Not only do victims frequently feel ignored or even abused by the criminal justice process, our adversarial systems lack mechanisms that would lead to apologies, restitution, compensation, and, most importantly, vindication for victims. Nor do communities receive the help they need. The criminal justice system misses the connection between the lives of individuals and their communities. That which harms the individual harms the whole community. The restorative justice model attempts to address these relationships and needs. It looks at the harm done to all and seeks effective ways to repair that harm. It actively involves victims, communities, and offenders in efforts to repair the damage.

3. How are offenders asked to take responsibility?

The current criminal justice system does not systematically encourage offenders to take responsibility for their actions. Accountability is focused on fulfilling the punishment imposed by the state, “on doing time,” rather than having offenders take responsibility for harm done. In adversarial

proceedings, such as ours, it may be in the interest of the defendant to deny responsibility. While there is much to be said for our adversarial, innocent-until-proven-guilty systems, a systemic result is that offenders are not required to take personal responsibility for the harm done to their victims. Even our language betrays us here. We say of those who have served their sentences that he [or she] has “paid his debt to society.” What of the debt to the victim? Or to the local community? In a restorative justice model, accountability for one’s own actions—accountability to those who have been harmed—is a key concept. Punishment cannot be a substitute for accountability to victims and communities. The restorative justice model insists that offenders understand the impact of their behaviors, take responsibility for their actions, and, if possible, make amends for them.

4. What are the roles and relationships of punishment and accountability in criminal justice?

For the current criminal justice system, incarceration is the most common punishment. While it is appropriate and necessary to incarcerate offenders who are a danger to society, incarceration as a punishment has many limitations. Along with the several criticisms of incarceration as one-size-fits-all punishment cited above on the basis of Michel Foucault’s study, incarceration has little ability to create empathy in offenders for their victims or a sense of responsibility in offenders for their crimes. Indeed, harshly long and mandatory minimum prison sentences may make offenders feel like *they* are the victims.

Further, because prisons increasingly lack the resources to provide inmates with education, job training, drug treatment, or other counseling, prisoners are left to their own resources. Instead of rehabilitation, prisons too often develop survival skills for prisoners. These skills are more appropriate to life on the streets than to life in law-abiding society. In addition, women prisoners face special challenges. They endure a sense of guilt for what happens to their children and families in a way that many men do not. The families of prisoners are themselves caught in the stigma of incarceration, which results in the alienation of these families from the broader society. Such families are vulnerable to a variety of ills: the breakup of marriages, impoverishment, the loss of children to state custody, and a new cycle of crime and punishment.

Finally, incarceration is enormously costly. The annual cost for incarceration in the United States is more than \$20,000 per prisoner (in some states, much more). Many states spend more of their budgets on corrections than on higher education. The costs are much higher in Canada (more than \$65,000 per year for men in the federal system, \$110,000 for women). The resources that are spent on incarceration might better be spent on crime prevention, community services, and services for crime victims.

Restorative justice looks for inclusive, collaborative processes and consensual outcomes in sentencing. In many restorative justice plans, victims are given the opportunity to confront offenders. Often, in these sentencing processes, alternatives to prison are developed that include restitution and community service and that more directly address the harms done to victim and community. The shame for offenders involved in these processes is the healthy reintegrative shame involved in facing their

victims, in confronting the harms they have done, in admitting guilt, and in working out a plan to make amends to society and to those they have harmed.

5. Are the causes of crime addressed?

The current criminal justice system seldom deals with the causes of crime. Restorative justice, while recognizing that past wrongs are never excuses for present crimes and do not absolve those who commit them of their responsibility, recognizes (1) that change in criminal behavior is not likely until these causes are addressed and (2) that responsibility for crime does not rest with the offender alone. Restorative justice insists that individuals, families, the larger community, and society as a whole are obligated to take responsibility for their own contributions to the conditions that give rise to crime. Taking responsibility includes changing unjust laws; challenging the social structures that lead to crime; and attacking problems such as racism, poverty, poor education, unemployment, drug use, and violence.

6. Is the present system fair?

For many, the criminal justice system is very unfair. Justice operates differently for the poor, for minorities, and for the vulnerable (e.g., the mentally ill and the mentally challenged) than it does for those with the resources to challenge the system. The poor, the minorities, the less educated, and the vulnerable are disproportionately represented in our prisons. Among the reasons that this is the case are discrimination, a lack of education, and less access to competent legal help. These people are more likely to be arrested, to be convicted, to be victims of prosecutorial misconduct, to serve long sentences, and (in the United States) to be sentenced to death. Sometimes the sentencing laws themselves discriminate, as in the disparity in sentences for those who sell crack cocaine (a street drug) and those who sell powdered cocaine (an upper class drug). Street crime is treated more harshly than white collar crime.

The unfairness is often exacerbated by crack-down-on-crime movements, which have resulted in harsh and mandatory sentences. These long sentences have made prison populations skyrocket. They have fed the perception among inmates that the system is unfair, as in the case of three-strikes laws that sometimes result in lifetime imprisonment for minor offenses. Restorative justice seeks to address the manifest unfairness of the present system—to change unfair laws and justice procedures. Proponents of restorative justice believe that communities and governments have the obligation not only to make justice equally available but also to make punishments proportional to the crime.

7. Does the system restore offenders back into their communities?

One of the most profound failures of the present system is the lack of attention given to the reintegration of offenders back into the community. When offenders are sentenced, victims and many in society mentally lock them up and throw away the key. Few prisons seriously address the problems offenders had when they committed the crime, the problems that imprisonment adds, the problems present in the offenders' families, and other problems offenders have when they are released. Rarely is there any help given to ex-offenders who must make the transition from a life in

which they make few decisions to a world in which they must make many decisions. For all this, however, the majority of those incarcerated will be released at some time, and, for not having addressed their problems, our societies are likely to pay a heavy price. A majority of parolees will re-offend. This results in an us-against-them attitude in society—the notion that those who are or have been in prison are bad people and those who have not been in prison are good people (as if the world could be so neatly divided). Not only do ex-offenders face the stigma of having been imprisoned, but, since the 1990s, laws and policies have been enacted that restrict those with felony convictions from obtaining many social and economic benefits, including welfare benefits, student loans, access to public housing, employment opportunities, and the right to vote. These restrictions make it even more difficult for ex-offenders to find their way back into the society from which prison removed them.

In contrast, restorative justice focuses on the needs of victims, communities, and offenders. The offender's reintegration and restoration is at the heart of restorative justice. Restorative justice proponents work to address the causes of crime, to get offenders to take responsibility for their actions, and to reintegrate offenders back into their communities. This requires a respect for the humanity of everyone, including offenders. Such respect offers to them the hope that they will not always be isolated and shamed by the community. Additionally, as victims and offenders come to know each other by working out a restorative justice plan, offenders begin to develop empathy and concern for their victims, and victims come to understand the problems faced by offenders. Because these restorative processes recognize the humanity of both victim and offender, offenders are less likely to re-offend, and victims are less likely to demonize offenders. As offenders give back to the community in the form of community service and restitution to victims, communities are more willing to help reintegrate offenders, and the community as a whole becomes safer.

8. Does the system encourage healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness?

In the current criminal justice system, there is little opportunity for healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Attempts at reconciliation and forgiveness often run counter to our adversarial-style criminal justice systems. In contrast, restoration and healing are at the center of the restorative justice model. Because restorative justice encourages offenders to face the harm they have done and to develop empathy for their victims, offenders are more likely to regret their crimes and to seek forgiveness from their victims (and, possibly, from God). The process is also more likely to encourage victims to consider forgiveness and to attempt reconciliation. Any movement toward restoration, forgiveness, and reconciliation helps victims and offenders to heal in their relationships with each other and with God.

9. Why is the restorative justice model used so rarely in criminal cases?

Despite the many failures of the current criminal justice system and the apparent advantages of restorative justice, the restorative justice model is rarely used to decide criminal cases. That is because there are significant barriers that hinder carrying out restorative justice programs and practices. Here are some of them:

- a. Our criminal justice systems, which favor imprisonment, have been the only justice paradigms with which we are familiar. Change to radically different restorative justice paradigms is difficult.
- b. There is too little awareness of how badly our current criminal justice systems are failing; too little knowledge of how much they cost us economically, socially, and spiritually; and too many misconceptions about the effectiveness of incarceration as a deterrent.
- c. Restorative justice is misunderstood as a way of excusing the crime. Persons who advocate restorative justice alternatives are accused of being soft on crime. Politicians and many in the position to make changes fear these accusations and attacks, which are likely to hurt their chances of staying in power.
- d. Crime nurtures emotional and vengeful responses. Victims may become so angry and vindictive that they favor retaliation and revenge rather than restoration and reconciliation.
- e. Some have developed an us-against-them mentality, which portrays offenders as evil and different from themselves. This attitude not only leads to the desire to keep prisoners out of sight and out of mind but also to a lack of concern about inhumane prison conditions, prisoners' rights, and unjust laws.
- f. Fear, prejudice, and systemic racism pervade our current criminal justice systems, which discriminate against minorities, the poor, and the most vulnerable.
- g. Restorative justice requires our focusing on the root causes of crime (e.g., poverty, racism, unemployment). These are difficult problems that require vast and systemic changes in our societies. It is easier to turn away.
- h. The current correctional systems have gained a great deal of economic and political momentum over the past three decades. Prisons are still being built at a rapid rate. More and more people are employed in building and staffing these prisons. Whole communities have become economically dependent on prisons. Several large companies are now in the businesses of building and running prisons. The sheer weight of the intertwined economic, political, and social systems involved in corrections make changing the current correctional systems of our two countries increasingly difficult. The scope of these intertwined systems has led some to call it the "prison-industrial complex." Against the power and momentum of this complex, the efforts of the proponents of restorative justice to change the system can seem small and inadequate.
- i. Restorative justice approaches cannot do everything. If offenders refuse to take responsibility, victims refuse to participate, or affected communities discourage participation, the restorative justice processes cannot go forward or, at least, cannot go forward as effectively as otherwise.

As earlier sections of this report have indicated, restorative justice proponents find much to criticize about our current criminal justice systems. However, these criticisms should be seen against the background of the need for balance in our systems between restorative processes and, where restoration cannot be effected, the processes currently used in our criminal justice systems. Indeed, advocates of restorative justice find much to applaud in our current systems: the emphases on the rule of law, due process, human rights, and good order. They also recognize that adversarial court processes are often necessary to sort out the truth. Zehr (2002, 59-60) proposes that justice can best be viewed as a continuum, with the current criminal justice systems on one end and restorative justice systems on the other. He recommends that we try to move as far as possible toward the restorative pole, although in some cases that may mean not moving far at all.

In making this contrast between restorative justice and the current criminal justice system, it may appear that restorative justice exists outside of governmental sanction and sponsorship. This is not the case. To be successful for the long term, restorative justice requires, and frequently receives, governmental support. Restorative justice cannot be fully implemented without the state. Not only can restorative justice be done within the criminal justice system, it can help to transform it. The committee shares the concerns of Zehr and other advocates of restorative justice about our present criminal justice systems, but we also believe, along with Zehr, that we need both poles of the justice continuum. Understood biblically, both restoration and retribution are part of justice. It is to that biblical understanding of justice that we now turn.

III. Biblical principles of justice

What we present here is merely a sketch of the features of the biblical presentation of justice. It must be so for three reasons. The first is that there is much too much in the Bible about justice for us to consider in a report of this nature. Pull on the string called "justice" in the pages of the Bible, and soon enough you will get the whole book. From cover to cover, the Bible is quite simply the book of God's justice. From the early chapters of Genesis to the late chapters of Revelation, the topic of justice is addressed. The principal words for justice are among the most common in Scripture. In the Bible, to paraphrase Amos, justice rolls on like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The second difficulty is that for all the ways the Bible addresses justice within its pages, it less often directly addresses what we call criminal justice. There is much we do not know about the courts, methods of punishment, legal practice, and the like in biblical times. Where we do find laws, they may come from various times, may have been implemented in different ways, and may not have been universally observed. The legal material in the Bible is often heavily theologized and there for other purposes than instructing us in the legal practices of ancient Israel.

A third and allied difficulty is that the legal materials in the Bible, including biblical reflections on justice, are deeply situated in the societies to which the biblical materials were first addressed. This deep connection with the culture for a long time has been recognized for the Old Testament and ancient Israel. The vocabulary, many of the practices, and the institutions of justice were shared with surrounding societies. This has not been as widely recognized for

the New Testament, but one of the more interesting developments in the area of New Testament studies has been the discovery of how deeply rooted in the society of ancient Israel and the empire of ancient Rome the writings of the New Testament are. The New Testament is more political than has been generally acknowledged. Modern Canada and the United States of America are not ancient Israel or ancient Rome. We will need not only to identify the key concepts of the biblical witness on justice but also to carry them from their original situation into the context of our time.

That being said, it remains clear that Scripture calls the community of Christ to a prophetic as well as a priestly presence in the world. Walter Brueggemann (2001, xxiii) calls the return to the prophetic witness of Scripture “a sobering . . . return to the most basic issues of biblical faith.” Scripture clearly calls us to the practices of justice. With all our cautions, we cannot allow ourselves to be silent where God calls us to speak out. To quote again from Brueggemann (2001, 125), “The prophetic witness of the church is not to be identified in some *specific functions* of ministry and not others. Prophetic witness is a mind-set. It is a countercultural consciousness of how the community of faith sees all things.”

A. *The deep grammar of justice*

First we need to step back a bit. What are we talking about here? What do we mean when we use the word *justice*? For all the differences among people in judging the justice of specific situations and the differences in culture in their expressions of justice, there seems to be a strong, nearly universal, notion of what justice is. In a chapter entitled “The Concept of Justice,” Henry Stob (1978, 124) gives expression to this pervasive sense of justice:

Justice is concerned with the distribution of goods and evils to each in accordance with what is *due* to each. Justice has to do with due allocation: goods to whom goods are due; evils to whom evils are due. The formula is: To each what is coming to him [*italics original*].

Stob here suggests that the word *justice* names a deep human impulse, or, better, a deep human need—the need for fairness, reciprocity, and what we might call “due-ness.” This impulse is so deep that we find it in children who have just begun to acquire language. One of the first things that they learn to say is: “That’s not fair.” Sophisticated analyses of justice attempt to break this impulse down into its component parts to give it a more precise statement and to justify it (that word again), but for most people the concept needs no justification. It is as real as the grass on which we walk and the air that we breathe. Justice, in this sense, just is.

So where does this impulse to justice come from? Answers to this question vary. Sociobiologists lately have suggested that the instinct to justice is adaptive, thus giving an evolutionary explanation. James Q. Wilson (1993, 55-78), who surveys the literature that shows how deeply situated the impulse to justice is in the human race, seems to suggest that human beings do a kind of moral calculus and emerge with the conclusion that it is better to be fair than not to be fair. There are many other explanations, but the biblical witness in this matter is unanimous: The root of our sense of justice comes from our creator. Our sense of justice reflects the character of our God.

Although this claim hardly needs to be defended for the readers of this report, Psalm 33 is instructive in this regard and introduces us to some of the biblical vocabulary for justice. Verses 4-5 are as follows:

For the word of the LORD is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.
The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

Note: Most biblical citations, including this one, are from the NIV. A few times, in order to clarify a point, we have translated freely.

The vocabulary of this section includes several of the key Old Testament words for justice, including *yashar* ("right, straight"), *'emunah* ("faithful, true"), *tsedeqah* ("righteous, just"), *mishpat* ("just decisions, the practice of justice"), *chesed* ("covenant loyalty, love"). These words for justice describe "the word of the Lord." The psalm then goes on to say, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made . . .," and describes the creating process as, "[The LORD] spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (vs. 9). The word of the Lord that establishes justice is the word that created the universe. Justice is built in.

Let us call this primary justice. When the Bible says that the Lord loves justice, it is to this primary sense of justice that it refers. The outcome of justice in this sense is *shalom*, not simply peace but right relationships, where each person, indeed, each part of creation, receives its due and lives in right relationship with every other part of creation. The restoration of this glorious justice is the great theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

We were created with a sense of this justice. It is for this reason that, for the title for this section of our report, we chose a metaphor derived from linguistics. Linguists sometimes speak of a deep or underlying grammar of which historical languages such as English are expressions—expressions much transformed by history and circumstance but reflective of this deep grammar nevertheless. If the word of God expressed at creation is, as Psalm 33 suggests, the deep grammar of justice, then our ideas about justice and our various expressions of justice are reflections, however inexact and flawed, of the underlying divine idea of justice.

1. Justice is about relationships

What can we say of this deep grammar of justice as it comes to expression in Scripture? The first and most important point is that the justice is always and thoroughly relational. There is very little of the modern, abstract notion of justice in antiquity and, in particular, in Scripture. The principal metaphors for the relative roles of God and human beings are the metaphors of father and king. These are not far apart in their ancient setting. Kings were fathers writ large. Involved in these relationships are honor and obedience. Psalms 96-99 are expressions of these themes. This excerpt from Psalm 96 is illustrative:

Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.

They will sing before the LORD, for he comes;
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his truth. (vss. 1-3,10,13)

If justice is personal, involving the honor (glory in the passage above) of the king, then it involves relationships not only with the king but also with the household of the king. Thus, any violation of another person or even of nature is an offense against the Lord. It is inconsistent to suppose that one can honor the king and not the king's household, as the prophets frequently say.

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. (Isa. 58:6-9)

Our examples to this point have been drawn from the Old Testament, but unless it be thought that this is only an Old Testament theme, it should be pointed out that these same themes echo throughout the New Testament. The Gospels are replete with quotations from Isaiah that declare the justice of the Lord and apply these themes to the mission and lordship of Jesus Christ (see the chapter by Glen Stassen and David P. Gushee [2003, 345-65]). N.T. Wright (2002, 173-93) offers a similar prophetic and political reading of the apostle Paul.

This is one of the many points at which our committee believes that the restorative justice movement is correct. There are many reasons why, in our societies, justice has been formalized in terms of the state against the offender (the State of X vs. Y). Many of them are good reasons, but when the practice of criminal justice takes little account of relationships among victim, offender, society, and God, something precious has been lost. We believe that the Bible calls us to a more relational form of justice than is usually practiced in our societies.

2. Justice is broken

Justice is broken. Along with the concept of primary justice—right relationships leading to *shalom*—we need a concept of a justice that corrects and restores what is broken. Criminal justice, as it is practiced in our societies, intends to correct (and perhaps to restore) in just this way. Confusion sometimes occurs because the single word *justice* is used for both justice in the sense of *being right* and justice in the sense of *setting right*.

The Bible is concerned, for the most part, with setting right. It does not so much describe justice as prescribe it. It is concerned less with the concept of righteousness than with the righting of relationships that have gone wrong. This gives the vocabulary of justice in the Bible its particular dynamic quality. Justice words such as *tsedeqah* in Hebrew and *dikaosune* in Greek refer not only to the concept of right but also to the setting right of what is broken. When he announces in the book of Romans the revealing of “a justice [a rightness, *dikaosune*] from God,” Paul has in mind a setting right of what is wrong. This, of course, is God’s setting right, but there is also in Scripture a call for a human’s setting right. It is the setting right of what is wrong that is at the heart of our study, so we will have to take a little time to explore this theme in Scripture.

3. Justice does not pass over wrongs

As we have noted above, restorative justice advocates have in the past set retribution and restoration against each other as if these were two *kinds* or paradigms of justice. The Bible does not do this. Both retribution and restoration are found in Scripture. Consider the following paragraph from Romans:

But now a righteousness [*dikaosune*, justice] from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness [*dikaosune*, justice] from God comes through faith in [or, better, “through the faithfulness of”] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26)

The overall theme here is restoration. God is determined to restore right relationships to all who will accept his restoration (“all who believe”). As part of God’s restorative initiative, however, he also honors justice in the retributive sense (“He did this to demonstrate his justice”). (It is important to note that, although the translation above [NIV] uses righteousness for the first statement and justice for the second, they are the same word in Greek, *dikaosune*.)

In order to explore this theme a little more fully, we need to reach back into the Old Testament. One of the most powerful ideas of justice—a part, it would seem, of the deep grammar of justice—is the idea that wrongs cannot simply be passed over. For any significant wrong, it will not do to simply offer forgiveness to the offender and go on. To do so violates not only the victim but also the community and, as we have seen, the Lord of the community. This concept—the heart of the idea of retribution (from the Latin *tribuere*, “to divide out, allot, assign; to grant, give”; re-tribuere, “to give again, give as due”)—is expressed in the Old Testament concept of *naqam*, often translated, misleadingly, as “vengeance.”

The historical background for the concept of *naqam* is illustrated in the stories of Genesis 4. The first story is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. The Lord, confronting Cain, says of the offense, “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.” This cry, the cry of the victim, expresses the need to redress wrongs, to set things right. That it is from the ground

means that all creation is implicated in the injustice promulgated by the human race. That God hears the cry and addresses it means that the Lord will not let the cry of the victims of injustice go unheard. Cain is cursed by the Lord to be “a restless wanderer on the earth,” an earth that will no longer produce crops for him (4:11-12). This expresses again in the nature of the penalty the scope of the offense: the wrongdoing of Cain impinges not only on his family but on the earth itself. All creation has been violated.

For Cain, the penalty imposed by God is too great to be borne (vs. 13) because it excludes him from the protection of God and exposes him to the vigilante justice of others. He in turn cries out to God for protection, and he receives the mark that protects him from the private vengeance of others. In a fallen world, as this story so clearly illustrates, justice must guard against both overlooking the wrong and extending the wrong by returning evil for evil. The impulse for revenge is deep within us, and, throughout the centuries, revenge has often masqueraded as justice.

In this instance, under the direct rule of God (with no government intervening), justice does two things: it both assesses a penalty on the offender and protects the offender from the anger and revenge of others (vs. 15). What is at stake in this protection is illustrated in the second story in Genesis 4 in the brief anecdote about Cain’s great-great-grandson, Lamech, whose version of justice is found in a doleful little song:

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
wives of Lamech, hear my words.
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for injuring me.
If Cain is avenged seven times,
then Lamech seventy-seven times.” (Gen. 4:23-24)

The problem of private justice must have weighed heavily in a society in which the central government in many instances was weak or nonexistent. In the legal codes, steps are taken to mitigate the problem. Cities and places of refuge are examples of these steps. Nevertheless, regardless of the difficulty of insuring justice in particular instances, the principle is established in the Cain narrative: justice belongs to God. This is summarily expressed in the formula cited in the Old Testament and quoted in the New: “‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” It is not vengeance at all that the Lord has in mind here, at least not in our sense of vengeance but rather final justice. We might paraphrase, “‘The last word is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30; see also Lev. 19:18 and Deut. 32:35; on the biblical concept of *naqam* as the *imperium* of God, see George Mendenhall [1973, 69-104]).

Thus, in a world in which crime often went, and still goes, unpunished, God is the guarantor of justice. The psalmist invokes this aspect of God in Psalm 94:1-2:

God of final justice [*naqam*], the LORD.
God of final justice, shine forth.
Rise up, O judge of the earth,
Bring retribution to the arrogant.

Retribution, in this biblical sense, involves two things, both expressed by derivatives of the same Latin word. The first is *vindication* (from the Latin

vindicare, with the dual meanings of “to protect” and “to punish.” Behind the word is the function of the *vindex*, equivalent to the Hebrew *go’el haddam*, the avenger, redeemer of blood). Justice vindicates the claims of the victim. The other is punishment (originally *vengeance*, derived from the same Latin root as vindication). Justice requires both the upholding of the victim and the punishment of the wrongdoer.

4. Governments are called to uphold justice

One more step is required in this analysis of what we have called the deep grammar of justice as it comes to expression in the Bible: the extension of this function of justice from God as the guarantor of justice to governments as the mediators of justice. Much could and probably should be said about this, but we will be brief. After an experiment with the direct or, at least, the covenantal and tribal rule of God in the period of the judges (Brueggemann 2001, 21-27), Israel asked for and received a more formal government in the person of the king. This prompted a good deal of reflection on the nature of good government (and, of course, on bad government; most of the kings abused the power granted them). Because the government of ancient Israel, along with the governments of its neighbors, was incarnated in the person of the king, these reflections are most commonly descriptions of what the ideal king should be like. Psalm 72:1-2 is a typical example. Its opening lines read:

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
He will judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

In these lines, we meet again the Old Testament vocabulary of justice. The first pair is *mishpat* and *tsedeqah*. The NIV translation uses English abstractions to convey the sense of the Hebrew, *justice* and *righteousness*. However, these words are plainer than that. The first of them here refers to the capacity to make good judgments, something close to what the classical tradition called *phronêsis*, “prudence.” We might translate the first line, “God, give to the king your sound judgment.” The second word, here translated righteousness, means “right” in the sense of “straight, not twisted by extraneous considerations.” What the writer has in mind is illustrated by the second set of lines, which use the same vocabulary but apply the words to the poor. We could paraphrase the whole, “Let the king be so endowed so that he will give sound and straight judgments on behalf of the poor.” Verse 4 extends this role of the righteous king in terms of vindication for the poor and vengeance on those who would exploit them:

He will defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
he will crush the oppressor.

“Defend” here translates the verb associated with *mishpat* as vindication. The last line expresses the other side of this coin: punishment. The righteous king is to “crush the oppressor.”

Crush may seem too strong for us, but this language, along with the manifold expressions of God’s wrath in Scripture, gives room for the legitimate anger of the oppressed and victims of injustice. It takes seriously

the cry of Abel. The word *crush* (daka') returns in a second, redemptive way in Isaiah 53:5:

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

As this second instance illustrates (and as we will develop at length below), retribution is not all there is to say about justice in the Bible, but if we eliminate retribution from justice, we will have violated the victims a second time.

The New Testament upholds this concept of legitimate government in the controversial but important passage, Romans 13:1-5:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

While a full exposition of this often misused passage and the various interpretations that have been made of it are beyond the scope of this study, a couple of observations are necessary. The first is that Paul sees governments as "servants of God." Governments and governing authorities answer to God, including—Paul surely has this in mind—the sadistic emperors of Rome. If justice is from God, then proper justice is always divine justice. We will return to this below. Second, the expressed function of government in this passage is precisely what we have been describing: upholding right and opposing wrong—vindication and punishment. It is the legitimate function of government to address the imbalances of society, whether they are those caused by intentional violations of others or by unintentional ones, and once again to bring about proper relationships.

Having said this, we caution our readers that the whole concept of punishment is extremely vexed. It is difficult to say exactly what punishment is and what it is supposed to do. Most of the time, defenders of punishment resort to utilitarian arguments: punishment restrains crime and helps correct the behavior of offenders. These arguments seem to us to be inadequate, even dubious. We acknowledge punishment as the left hand of God's justice, but we are not entirely clear on what punishment does. Perhaps it is enough to say that punishment is the other side of vindication.

We also caution those who would advocate more severe punishment that punishment can easily pass over into human vengeance—not the expression of God's justice but of our anger. It is important to keep in mind that the Bible is the book of God's restoring justice and that restoration is clearly God's first intention.

5. The community of Christ is called to a prophetic role

What of the community of Christ—the church in the large sense? Does the church have a role to play in advocating and supporting certain criminal justice practices rather than others? The role of the Christian community with regard to this part of justice is probably best expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. This role involves a creative and prophetic appeal for justice. In the sermon, Jesus uses the metaphors of salt and light for the church's role in society. Both of these can be thought of as metaphors of enhancement. Salt, once it dissolves into the food, cannot be seen, but it can be tasted; light makes visible what otherwise would be in the darkness. In working out this perspective on his followers' roles in the society of his time, Jesus comments on a wide variety of topics.

Most germane to our topic are the rulings on an eye for an eye and love for enemies. The first of these goes as follows:

You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matt. 5:38-42)

This is a variety of "final justice [vengeance] is the Lord's" for powerless or, perhaps better, creatively righteous people. In the face of manifest injustices—the first two illustrations evoke the Roman occupation—the disciples of Jesus are called on to subvert these injustices by going farther than compelled, thus showing the absurdity of the demands. As in the case of the saying about adultery, which does not revoke the law but goes beyond it ("You have heard it was said, 'Do not commit adultery'"), the principle of equal for equal (an eye for an eye) is not revoked by Jesus. The principle of *lex talionis* has its place in justice, not as a requirement of justice but as a limit on punishment: Jesus requires of his disciples a righteousness that goes beyond this (Matt. 5:20) to bring attention to the systemic injustices of society. The church's role, in other words, is advocacy and prophecy, salt and light.

The ruling on loving enemies goes in a somewhat different direction and provides a transition to the second part of our study—restoration. Jesus says:

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:43-48)

Here Jesus reminds us (and, through us, our societies) that, for God, retribution is not the last word or, perhaps, even the first. It is to that last and first word that we now turn.

B. *The story of restoration*

In treating justice under the heading of deep grammar, we have supposed that justice is always the same. Historical expressions may be different, but this

is because we give only partial and inadequate expression to God's principles of justice. Within this concept there is a limited role for restoration. The Bible tells us that systems of justice tend to go wrong over time. We need periodic readjustments—Years of Jubilee—in which old debts are cancelled, prisoners are freed, and the poor allowed to go back to their ancestral homes—in short, the whole program of Isaiah 61:1-3 and a program claimed by Jesus for his own ministry. In antiquity these periodic readjustments were known as *mesharim* edicts (on these and their role in the structure of Israelite justice, see Moshe Weinfeld [2000]).

This sort of restoration, however, while important, assumes a static structure of justice. The central story of Scripture describes a deeper and more powerful kind of restoration. What is different about this restoration is that it describes something that is truly new, not just a readjustment, not just a going back to the original. It involves both a history and a future—a movement toward a new and better justice. It involves, above all else, an overcoming—a transformation of individuals, of communities, and of relationships. It involves hope.

1. Restoration brings a new and better justice

Perhaps a simple illustration will suggest what we have in mind. Suppose a deep breach occurs in a family. Words are said. Injuries are suffered. The family splits apart in mutual rancor. Now suppose that through hard work and much pain and persistence, the family overcomes the rancor and finds a way back to love and unity. The wounds remain, although now they have healed over. They become in the consciousness of the family not wounds anymore but badges of the struggle. Having worked through the divisions and animosities, the family is now stronger than before. The old unity has been replaced by a new and sweeter love, a love with both a history and a future.

What is required to reach this point for this family? First of all, a sense of belonging that is stronger than the forces of division. This sense of belonging need not reside in every member of the family. One family member will do it if that person is sufficiently strong and persistent. Second, the wrongs need to be addressed. Exactly how they are addressed depends on the situation, but they cannot be glossed over (in actual family conflict, a trained mediator may be necessary to ensure safety for the members of the family and to enable them to speak the truth in love). Covering over the wounds may produce an apparent reconciliation but not healing. Third—and there is no way around this—the ones who have been wounded will have to find a way through the wounds to new life.

2. Restoration is the story of God

It is not hard to recognize in this description the biblical story of the family of God. Paul's narrative in the book of Romans is perhaps the most authoritative telling of the story. In the first chapters of Romans, Paul describes the deep divisions that continue to rack God's once-good creation. One member of the family—the strongest and most persistent—will not let go of the family as family. It is his faithfulness that is described in the verses quoted earlier from Romans 3:

But now a righteousness [justice] from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness [justice]

from God comes through faith in [or, better, by the faithfulness of] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (vss. 21-24).

James D.G. Dunn (1998, 342) describes “the righteousness [or, better, justice] of God” in this way: “The righteousness of God . . . denotes God’s fulfillment of the obligations he took upon himself in creating humankind and particularly in the calling of Abraham and the choosing of Israel to be his people.” God’s justice here is his faithfulness to covenant obligations. He is determined to restore his people to the circle of his love.

This divine restoration, like the restoration of the family in our illustration, requires that wrongs be faced and addressed. This, in part, is the role of faith: the recognition of the need for forgiveness. This overcoming justice comes, as the apostle says, “to all who believe.” There remain consequences for our wrongs, and these are often tragic consequences. The deep grammar of justice described above is not revoked, at least not in its entirety. What is revoked for those who wish to come back is the last and greatest penalty, exclusion from the family of God. No one, says the apostle, need be excluded from the family of God.

There remain the wounds suffered by the victims of our wrongdoing. These wounds are borne symbolically and actually by Jesus Christ, the wounded Lamb of Revelation 5. As Paul puts it in Romans 3:25: “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith, by his blood.” “By his wounds are we healed” (Isa. 53:5). The wounds survive even the resurrection (John 20:27), but, in God’s creative power, the wounds take on new meaning. They become badges of overcoming.

3. Restoration can be our story

We are familiar with this story. We believe it, but often we marginalize it to the spiritual realm. Is it a story only of God’s ways? A story without relevance to our daily lives, particularly our lives in the secularized and competitive societies of which we are a part? Or is it a story that describes what justice can and should be on the human plane as well as on the divine? Our argument, quite simply, is that this indeed is the case. The great story of restoration written in the heavens can and should be a pattern for restoration worked out on the ground, even the ground of our secular societies. We believe that this story is rich and resounds with powerful applications for all of life.

Let us walk again through the elements of the story. First, we have a family with deep divisions and lasting wounds. Two aspects of this description are important for our approach to social and criminal justice. The first is that it is, nevertheless, a family. Its members belong to one another whether they recognize this belonging or not. Our argument begins with belonging. Societies are not families exactly, but we do belong to them. Belonging in this regard is not something we choose; what we choose is how to respond to the fact of our belonging. This is the opposite of what many in our culture assume: that choosing is first and belonging is second. From a biblical perspective, belonging is first and choosing is second. The principal biblical metaphor for this is the often-misunderstood concept of covenant. Covenant is not something we choose individually but rather,

having been chosen, something we own. Of the second aspect of our description of the family, the deep divisions and lasting wounds, we will have much to say below.

4. Governments are called to restoration

The second step in the story is that someone arises who calls the divided family back to unity. In the story of salvation, this is God directly—his coming to us in Jesus Christ. However, on the social plane, just as in the case of present criminal justice systems, God works through other agencies. Here once again there is a role for the state. This may seem to be a remarkable claim, but it fits well within the perspectives of Scripture. If we peruse again the descriptions of the ideal king, we will find that one of the roles of the king is to bring people back together again. This is most emphatically true for the descriptions of the messianic king. Isaiah 9:6-7 is one such description, with its emphasis on the role of government (*misorah*) bringing peace (*shalom*):

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

To say that governments are responsible for overcoming division and bringing people together, for reconciliation and the restoration of harmony, is not to say that governments will recognize this mandate as coming from Christ. It requires no Christianization of society. What it requires is a consciousness on the part of governments that their role is not only to maintain a just order but to call their citizens to overcome past divisions and find a new and richer unity. In doing so, governments must also recognize their own evil and repent of it.

Indeed governments have, occasionally, done just that. There have been moments of overcoming when old divisions were set aside and a new unity was forged. For U.S. society, one such moment was in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War when President Lincoln called a deeply wounded nation to a greater vision of union, a vision that not only had a past fraught with pain but that also had a future of great hope. From time to time, that vision has been held up again in front of the American people. In our time, one of the greatest examples of such overcoming has been the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa following the collapse of apartheid and the beginning of majority rule. These examples show that we are not speaking simply of a spiritual ideal here but of a powerful possibility.

If, then, governments have responsibility for overcoming divisions, how do they go about doing this? It is enough to recall the other two elements of

the great story of restoration. The first of these is the redressing of wrongs. Wrongs must be faced and addressed, whether these wrongs are individual or systemic. Governments must pay careful attention to what we have called the deep grammar of justice. There must be a sense of balance, a righting of wrongs, vindication of the victim, and punishment for the wrongdoer. This is consistent with the entire biblical witness.

What must also be addressed, however, is the broken community. The most common punishment in our societies is exclusion—imprisonment—often for long periods of time. Prison often leads to other kinds of exclusions later, especially difficulty reintegrating into society. This amounts to large parts of our societies' being healed by amputation. This will never work. If we are guided by the great story of restoration, then the focus must be on bringing the community back together and restoring the broken bonds of our societies. This is by no means easy, for the wounds persist. How can we in our societies find our way through the wounds to new life? We will address these questions below.

Although difficult to achieve, we believe that restoration in this deeply biblical sense is not only a worthy goal but one that is required by Scripture. Of course, complete restoration often lies beyond us and our governments. On this plane, the possibility of exclusion of those who would not be part of our societies must remain an option. Even in the great story of restoration, there remains open the possibility of final exclusion from God. Some may choose, by their actions or words, not to belong.

5. The Christian community is called to restoration

If governments have a central role to play in overcoming evil with good, what of the Christian community? What is our role in restoration? The Bible makes clear that we are called to be a community of witness. Consider I Peter 2:9-10, quoting from Exodus 19:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The role of this priestly community is to hold open in every age the possibility of reconciliation, to remind the world that punishment and exclusion are not the last word.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5:18-20)

One of the greatest statements of this role for the community of Christ is found in Isaiah 42:

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.
He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope.”

This is what God the LORD says—
he who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:
“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,
to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (vss. 42:1-7)

The first application of this passage is to Jesus Christ, but the second is to the body of Christ. What the passage describes is both the goal and manner of our servant presence in the world. The goal is the restoration of the community of the nations, the establishment of justice across the globe. The manner is the quiet, encouraging, self-sacrificial way of the servant of God. It is to this goal and to this manner that Scripture calls us. To that, we add this hope, well-voiced by Lewis Smedes (1983, 28), “A prodigious benevolence and a powerful freedom invade ordinary justice so that the human race is not mired forever in divine retribution.” In this new historical climate of freedom and empowerment in the Spirit, even through governments and societies that are still imperfect, come new possibilities for restorative alternatives groaning with expectant life. It is to these possibilities, offered in the face of what is all too often a cynical and heartless call to harsher punishments that we now turn.

IV. Principles and conclusions

A. *Justice principles*

Drawing from our study, we offer the following basic principles:

1. God is just and seeks justice for all creation (Ps. 11:7, 33:5; Isa. 61:8; Jer. 9:24). In this primary sense, justice is defined by right relationships among all things: God and humanity, each person to the other, each creature to the other, all things great and small, from highest heaven to the atoms of the universe, all things together in one community of creator and creation. For this community of creation, the Bible uses the word *shalom*—that peace of which it can be said, “Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other” (Ps. 85:10).
2. God grants to the authorities and powers of this world in their various realms the responsibility and authority to maintain justice and promote peace (Isa. 42:4, 51:4-5; Jer. 9:24; Amos 5:24; Rom. 13:1-5).
3. In calling the authorities and powers of the world to justice, the Lord in his own Word reminds them and us over and over again that if true justice is to

prevail, it must come to those who are the poorest and weakest among us. In Isaiah, the Lord calls us “to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke, . . . to share your food with the hungry and provide the poor wanderer with shelter” (Isa. 58:6-7). In Amos, he calls us to “let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24).

4. When justice is violated, we are called through the governments and other means that God has given us to right the wrong, to restore community, and to reestablish peace in as far as we can do these things. In this, God is our example. It is God’s own setting-right justice of which the New Testament speaks when it says that “now, apart from the law, the justice [*dikaiosune*] of God has been manifested . . . the justice of God that comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Rom. 3:21-22). God’s creative and corrective justice seeks to address the seriousness of the wrong (Rom. 3:25), to restore the sinner (Rom. 3:24), and to bring about reconciliation (2 Cor. 3:18-19). Human justice should in its own way seek these same things.
5. Justice, therefore, should seek *restoration and healing*. This requires, among other things, that justice properly pursued will:
 - a. Seek vindication and healing for victims, not pushing victims aside in the pursuit of blind justice but recognizing their pain and loss.
 - b. Take seriously the harm done by requiring of the offender a sentence proportional to the weight of the crime, which is what the Bible means by an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. While such proportionality cannot easily be defined, this principle guards against the perils of both leniency and severity.
 - c. Call the offender to take responsibility for the crime and offer ways for the offender to do so.
 - d. Restore, where possible, the losses suffered by the victim.
 - e. Seek reconciliation between offender and victim, provided the victim also desires reconciliation.
 - f. Attempt to restore the peace (*shalom*) of the community.
 - g. Involve the community in the processes of justice, recognizing that we all, victim and offender alike, belong to each other and have responsibility for each other.
6. Punishment, while a legitimate part of justice, must be exercised in such a way as to promote healing and restoration whenever possible. In the absence of concerns for restoration and community, punishment can become vengeful, violent, and vicious. Instead of promoting justice, punishment can foster injustice; instead of healing, division; instead of *shalom*, disharmony. All just societies must seek to guard against such things.

Therefore, synod is urged to support the restorative justice movement, which in various ways and places has sought to bring to the practice of justice some or all of the principles listed above. Synod is urged to encourage individual Christians, as well as churches and other Christian institutions, to become

involved in restorative justice efforts. The principles outlined above apply not only to the practice of justice in our communities and nations but to churches and other specifically Christian organizations. Church discipline, as the Church Order already recognizes, should seek restoration and the wholeness of the community.

B. An affirmation of the restorative justice movement

In light of these principles and conclusions, we find these specific themes of the restorative justice movement worthy of praise and support:

1. We support the restorative justice movement's emphasis on the relational aspects of justice. Our present criminal justice systems are often unnecessarily adversarial. They set the state against the offender, victims against offenders, and society against offenders. From such a beginning, it is difficult to restore offenders to our communities, even though most offenders will one day return to society.
2. We support the restorative justice movement's concern for victims. Victims, as we have seen above, require vindication, but they also seek restoration. Our present systems often pay too little attention to the needs of victims.
3. We support the restorative justice movement's concern for the restoration of offenders. The path of return specified by restorative justice is a hard one. It involves taking responsibility for the wrong done, working to restore the harm where possible, and suffering whatever consequences result from the criminal offense. Restorative justice provides a clear path back to the community, which is often not the case in our criminal justice systems.
4. We support the restorative justice movement's attempts to include the community in the criminal justice process. Restorative justice assumes a more biblical, covenantal sense of community than is assumed or practiced in our often anonymous societies. In fact, one of the difficulties faced by restorative justice practices is that, while these practices assume community, too often true community is absent.
5. We support the attempt by the restorative justice movement to make restoration of *shalom* the first and last words of the criminal justice process—not an afterthought in systems largely dedicated to processing huge numbers of offenders in the most efficient way possible.
6. We support the restorative justice movement's call for less reliance on imprisonment as the one-size-fits-all form of punishment. While imprisonment does secure safety for society from some dangerous felons, one day most return to society, changed, if at all, for the worse by the experience.
7. Finally, we support the efforts of the restorative justice movement to bring consciously Christian values to the practice of criminal justice. To those working in this field, we offer our deep admiration and appreciation for their tireless efforts on behalf of justice, their creative responses to difficult issues, and their countless expressions of the love of Christ.

C. What churches can do

Therefore, what can churches do to promote these principles of justice in their own communities? The following are only a few basic directions.

You will find more in our appendix and on the CRC justice website (www.crcjustice.org) and, specifically, the restorative justice link (www.crcjustice.org/crjs.restore.htm). This link lists many detailed suggestions for action, as well as websites, organizations, bibliographies, and other resources related to restorative justice.

1. Churches (and their members) can *advocate* for changes in the laws to promote a restorative perspective in the criminal justice systems of our two nations. Canada has gone farther than the United States in bringing a restorative justice perspective to the legal system, but both nations offer many restorative justice initiatives at various levels of government. These should be encouraged and supported.
2. Churches (and their members) can *get involved* in restorative justice efforts, such as victim-offender mediation, by learning about restorative justice, seeking out local restorative justice efforts, and working with groups already promoting restorative justice. The resources here are vast and growing.
3. Churches (and their members) can *help support victims*. There are many victim advocacy and support groups.
4. Churches (and their members) can *participate in prison ministries*.
5. Churches (and their members) can *help the families* of offenders and ex-offenders.
6. Churches (and their members) can *help reintegrate prisoners* back into their communities. This is especially hard but important work.
7. Churches and other Christian institutions can *examine their own practices* to see if these practices reflect the spirit and the practice of restorative justice. Is attention being paid to victims? To the harm done? To the community? Are those who have committed offenses asked to take responsibility and also given a path to restoration? Do the practices of the institution allow for and promote reconciliation? These and other such questions should be asked of all our justice proceedings at all levels (international, national, state or province, and local communities).
8. Churches (and their members) can *encourage the practice of restorative justice* in homes, schools, and churches.

Perhaps the most pressing need in this area is help in reintegrating ex-offenders back into the community. A couple of members of the committee have had experience in this area, some successful, some not. The following is one of the success stories. It illustrates both the difficulty and the promise of the work. The story is of a young man who, at the age of thirteen, was sentenced to prison for killing a man in the neighborhood.

He . . . , along with two other youths, stole from a man walking down the street. The man died over a few dollars. The youth was sentenced to prison. In order to survive, he had to be cold, hard, and without feelings. At the age of twenty-five, he was released from prison with many years of probation. The young boys in the neighborhood, who

were not born at the time [of the murder], made comments about his being a murderer. He came to church and heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, [but] he did not believe that Jesus could love him [and] never ask for anything. The young man could not get a job; didn't have any money; and refused to sell drugs; especially because he was on probation. The [probation] officer was waiting for him to make one wrong move. He continued to come to church, gave his life to Christ, and was mentored by the pastor. . . . Members of the church encouraged him to get a driver's license. That summer he got a job through our summer day camp. The job of the probation officer was to tell us of the crime that he had done to deter us from hiring him. [The young man] did an excellent job of sharing his life and Jesus to our youth. This gave an opportunity for him to apply for another job and [be able to] give reference of employment and show that he had a license. He grew in his relationship with Christ and married a Christian woman from our church. They have a family of three boys. He is still on probation but has learned to deal with the system because he trusts God to provide the way. The church taught, supported, loved, and continued to encourage him. Recently an adult in the neighborhood said that they never thought they would see this [kind of] change in him. Christ has made all the difference.

V. Recommendations

The Committee to Study Restorative Justice recommends the following to synod:

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. John De Vries, Dr. Clayton Libolt, and Ms. Gail Rice.
- B. That synod affirm the justice principles listed in IV, A above.
- C. That synod call our churches to preach and teach restorative justice as a biblical perspective and to apply the principles of restorative justice to the problems of crime in our communities and countries.
- D. That synod encourage the active participation of churches and church members in restorative justice efforts in order to restore and reconcile victims and offenders where possible, and to effect, as far as possible, the establishment of justice for all members of our societies.
- E. That synod direct the denominational Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action to work with CRC Publications and our educational institutions, including Calvin Theological Seminary, to provide materials and create opportunities for our members to learn the practices and principles of restorative justice (including the maintenance of a suitable website) so that they can better witness to and work within our societies to promote and practice restorative justice.
- F. That synod direct the denominational agencies to target low income areas for church plants and to provide these church plants with the financial support necessary to create vibrant spiritual communities that will become beacons of restorative justice for our cities and nations.

Grounds:

1. The Lord calls the church to this work (Matt. 25:31-46).
2. Restorative justice teaches that the most effective way to deal with crime is to address its causes. Neighborhood churches in high-need areas are well positioned to address the causes of crime: economic, social, political, and spiritual.

G. That synod ask each classis to establish a restorative justice contact person to provide the classis with information regarding restorative justice and to link members of the classis with restorative justice programs in that classis.

H. That synod direct the denominational Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action to designate a person to facilitate contact and communication among the classical contact persons.

I. That synod direct the classes to make regular reports to synod through the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action on the progress of restorative justice efforts in their areas in order to monitor denomination-wide involvement in restorative justice and to help maintain a denominational database of restorative justice projects.

J. That synod urge congregations, schools, denominational offices, other Christian institutions, and homes to employ restorative justice practices in their community lives.

K. That synod dismiss the committee with thanks.

Committee to Study Restorative Justice

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Appendix

Resources re Restorative Justice Issues

Note: Additional resources will be listed (and regularly updated) on the Restorative Justice link (www.crcjustice.org/crjs_restore.htm) of the CRC justice website (www.crcjustice.org). The following are a few key resources:

Books

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Organizations

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE; Grand Rapids, MI 49560; Peter Vander Meulen, Coordinator; 616-224-0807 [www.crcjustice.org]
 Restorative justice link: [www.crcjustice.org/crjs_restore.htm]

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action is a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church that deals with several social justice issues: restorative justice, racism, HIV / AIDS, poverty in North America, world hunger, war and peace, religious persecution, refugees, and so forth. Its website has information and resources on all these issues and

a link to restorative justice. *The Advocate* is its monthly electronic newsletter.

Prison Fellowship, 1856 Old Reston Ave., Reston, VA 20190; (703) 478-0100 or 877-478-0100 or 800-497-0122 [www.pfm.org]

Prison Fellowship (PF) works *through the churches*, primarily using volunteers. It has many excellent books and training materials available as well as some skilled staff people who are willing to train congregations. PF has done extensive work in many areas that restorative justice efforts touch: advocating a restorative approach as an alternative to the current criminal justice system; evangelizing and ministering to prisoners; mentoring prisoners before they are released and providing aftercare and mentoring after they are released; meeting the needs of prisoners' families; and meeting the needs of victims of crime. It has staff people who are active in training groups and developing materials for meeting the needs of victims, mentoring prisoners, ministering to prisoners' families, and providing aftercare for ex-offenders. PF's well-known Angel Tree program has grown and has become more involved in meeting the needs of prisoners' families.

The division of Prison Fellowship of most interest to restorative justice advocates is Justice Fellowship. Pat Nolan, who heads Justice Fellowship, is active on several fronts, including dealing with important legislative issues. Justice Fellowship puts much of its information and resources on the Internet, and its monthly Justice eReport keeps people updated on the latest news in restorative and criminal justice from a Christian perspective (see <http://www.justicefellowship.org> or <http://www.pfm.org/JusticeTemplate.cfm>). In 2003, Justice Fellowship held an outstanding national conference on restorative justice and will hopefully sponsor future conferences.

Center for Public Justice, P.O. Box 48368; Washington, DC 20002-0368; 1-866-CPJUSTICE (1-866-275-8784) [www.cpjjustice.org]

The Center for Public Justice (CPJ) is an independent civic education and policy research organization that bases its research, publications, training, and advocacy on a Christian political foundation. Its mission is to equip citizens, develop leaders, and shape policy in order to serve God, advance justice, and transform public life. CPJ's resources include many helpful publications, as well as *Capital Commentary*, its free, periodic electronic news bulletin.

Church Council on Justice and Corrections, 507 Bank Street; Ottawa, ON, K2P 1Z5; 613-563-1688 [www.ccjc.ca/main.cfm]

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections is a national coalition of faith-based individuals and churches that was created in Canada in 1974 to promote a restorative approach to justice, with an emphasis on addressing the needs of victims and offenders; mutual respect; healing; individual accountability; community involvement; and crime prevention. Christian Reformed churches in Canada are members of this coalition. *The Well* is its monthly electronic newsletter.

National Center for Victims of Crime, 2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300; Arlington, VA 22201; 703-276-2880 [*www.ncvc.org*]

This is a national resource and advocacy center for crime victims that collaborates with local, state, and federal partners, working through grassroots organizations, to provide direct services to victims, public education, public policy initiatives, and training and technical assistance.

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), 1757 Park Road NW; Washington, DC 20010-2101; 202-232-6682 [*www.try-nova.org*]

NOVA is committed to recognizing victims' rights. It provides support, education, and direct services to victims and victims' programs.

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overture 1: Permit the Transfer of the Los Angeles Church of Love CRC to Classis Pacific Hanmi

Classis Greater Los Angeles overtures synod to transfer the Los Angeles Church of Love, pastored by Rev. James Chang Kim, from Classis Greater Los Angeles to Classis Pacific Hanmi. This transfer has been requested by the church and approved by both Classis Greater Los Angeles and Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Ground: This church has tried to work within Classis Greater Los Angeles and has had great difficulty doing so because their membership is primarily first generation Korean.

Classis Greater Los Angeles
Gary M. Stevens, stated clerk

Overture 2: Convene Synod 2010 at The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to request that Synod 2010 be held in Edmonton, Alberta, at the facility of The King's University College. First Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, will be celebrating its one-hundredth anniversary in 2010 and would serve as the convening church of synod.

Grounds:

1. Having synod in Edmonton would be of benefit to the CRCNA, as well as to our churches in Canada, especially western Canada. The large benefit would include increased unity among the churches and awareness of the denomination in western Canada. We feel that this kind of unity and exposure is vital for a binational denomination such as the CRCNA.
2. There is a willingness and a desire to do this both by the denomination and by those in Classis Alberta North.
3. The facilities at The King's University College are adequate to host synod (see Appendix).

Classis Alberta North
Homer G. Samplonius, stated clerk

Appendix

General Infrastructure Requirements

Synod Requirements	King's Capability
Need lodging for 230 to 250 people. Includes 188 delegates, 21 advisers, study committee representatives, news staff, synod staff, and so forth.	By summer 2004, 187 rooms are available. 107 are single (6 bedrooms/2 bathrooms per suite). The current 80 rooms can easily accommodate 2 people each. Total of 267. By 2008, another residence may be completed. A Holiday Inn is 5 minutes from King's.
The cost for lodging should not exceed (US)\$11 per person per night (amount charged currently). Try to give each attendee their own place.	Lodging fees are manageable.
Need a place to feed 230-250 people for three meals per day in an efficient way. Current approximate meal prices (US): Breakfast – \$4.95; Lunch – \$7.50; Supper – \$8.40.	Space and fees for meals is manageable.
Need an auditorium that has enough space to hold the tables and chairs to seat 215 delegates and advisers comfortably, including a raised dais for the officers of synod.	Easily accommodated.
Lobby space for large displays of agencies and other ministries.	Yes.
Copy machines for both small jobs as well as sufficient capacity for a large quantity of documents in a short period of time.	Yes.
Computers for staff and news room personnel.	Yes.
Internet access for transmitting the sessions of synod as well as news reports to a variety of sources.	Yes.
A large screen up front and projection equipment to project songs for worship and other materials during the course of the week.	Yes.
Sufficient floor microphones (10 or 12) as well as desk microphones for the officers' table and the study committee reps table.	Yes.
Technical support staff to assist with set up of computers, microphones, and any other electronic equipment.	Yes.

Overture 3: Allow Former Elders to Serve as Delegates to Synod

I. Background

It has been the experience of Classis Zeeland in recent years that it is difficult to recruit elders who are available and willing to serve as delegates to synod. There may well be former elders in our congregations who are well-

qualified, have the time, and would be very interested in being synodical delegates. Because this is very likely a concern of not only Classis Zeeland but of other classes as well, Classis Zeeland presents the following overture to Synod 2005 for consideration.

II. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures synod to allow former elders who have served a local church within a classis during the previous five years to be nominated as delegates to synod in the event that a sufficient number of current elders cannot be found and that this ruling of synod be placed in a supplement to Church Order Article 45.

Grounds:

1. In recent years, it has been increasingly difficult for classes to find current elders who are available and willing to be delegates to synod.
2. This ruling would allow classes and synod to utilize the services of well-qualified men who may have attended previous synods, may have unique qualifications for serving synod, may have the time to do so as a retired elder, and /or may be especially interested in this work.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 4: Replace Article 41 of the Church Order

I. Background

The practice of mutual assistance and supervision among the churches by means of Article 41 questions dates back to the Synod of Dordt in 1578. In our early history, this assistance and supervision took place by asking the delegates to classis to respond orally at the beginning of each session of classis to a series of questions. Later, these questions were placed on the classical credentials. Throughout the years, the number of questions to be asked was increased or decreased, and some of the questions were revised or replaced.

It is our observation that the present questions are neither very productive nor of critical significance in this work of mutual assistance and supervision. These questions are usually answered with a mere yes, or no, or n/a. Also, upon investigation, we have learned that question 5 rarely produces any helpful information for Home Missions or for our local councils. Hardly ever is there a need to follow up at classis on any Article 41 answers. Furthermore, the new version of the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting covers very well the need for mutual supervision and encouragement.

We feel that Article 41 can be replaced with a simple testimonial on the credential that each council is being faithful to the doctrinal standards and church order of the Christian Reformed Church and diligent and effective in carrying out its ministry.

II. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2005 to replace Church Order Article 41 with the following article:

The credential to classis shall include the names of the delegates and a testimonial that the council faithfully adheres to the doctrinal standards and the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church and diligently and effectively attends to its ministry within the congregation, community, classis, denomination, and the broader kingdom of God.

Grounds:

1. Such a credential testimony would continue the practice of being held accountable to each other at each session of classis for matters of faith and practice.
2. The mutual assistance and supervision, envisioned by Church Order Article 41, can be more effectively handled by the church visitors, using the new Guide for Conducting Church Visiting.
3. The brief list of questions under the present Church Order Article 41 does not adequately assess whether a church is flourishing in its ministry and being faithful to the doctrinal standards and church order.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Appendix

Revised Classical Credential

The classical credential would reflect this change and appear as follows:

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

CLASSICAL CREDENTIAL

To Classis _____.

To convene _____, _____ at the _____ Church of _____.

The council of the _____ Christian Reformed Church of _____, has appointed _____ and _____ as delegates to the meeting of classis referred to above. The alternate delegates are _____ and _____.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all deliberations and transactions of classis regarding all matters legally coming before the assembly and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the concept of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church, as well as in harmony with the Church Order.

We further testify that the council of this church, in our local congregational setting, faithfully adheres to the doctrinal standards and the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church, and diligently and effectively attends to our ministry within the congregation, community, classis, denomination, and the broader kingdom of God.

Below are items of information or requests for the advice and help of classis.

By order of the council,

_____, president

_____, clerk

_____, date

Overture 5: Drop Questions 5-a, 5-b, and 5-c from Church Order Article 41

Classis California South overtures synod to drop Questions 5-a, 5-b, and 5-c from Church Order Article 41.

Grounds:

1. These questions reflect an outdated view of how we minister to people. Question 5-a reflects a time in the life and history of the CRC when we started new churches with a nucleus of CRC members who had moved to an area where no church existed. Christian Reformed Home Missions would then challenge a group to begin new congregations. That is no longer the practice. Questions 5-b and 5-c reflect a time when the pastor or elder knew everyone in the church and knew where they were living even temporarily. That is no longer the case.
2. The implementation of these questions is not done within Classis California South, and, we suspect, they are also not implemented elsewhere in the denomination. For the reasons explained in Ground 1 above, there seems to be little motivation within our classis to follow through with implementing these actions.

Classis California South
Will Verhoef, stated clerk

Overture 6: Change the Title for the New Chief Denominational Executive Position

I. Background

Synod 2004 chose for the new chief officer of the CRC the title Executive Director of the Christian Reformed Church.

This choice is highly problematic. In fact, it is a contradiction in terms. Whatever such an executive may direct, it cannot be a church as understood biblically, confessionally (B.C., arts. 27, 30-32; H.C, L.D. 21), or polity wise (Church Order Arts. 27, 76). An executive can direct denominational ministries, agencies, services, headquarters, finances, and staff, but cannot be the executive director of a church. If the title is appropriate at all, it could be used of a single office—and that, we confess, is permanently filled.

If synod were to conclude that the proposed title is the most appropriate, it could be retained but only if the description of the object of this officer's task were amended. Accordingly, the full description would then read Executive Director of Denominational Ministries (or Agencies).

It would be the better part of wisdom, however, to avoid the proposed title altogether. Biblically, such a title conflicts directly with the servant character of all offices in the church. We need think only of John 13:1-17. As to our church polity, all offices, ministries, assemblies, and denominational structures are meant to serve the church as it exists in local churches.

Finally, considerable attention has been devoted to finding ways of overcoming the growing gap—whether perceived or real—between local congregations and denominational structures and agencies. Bestowing on the highest

denominational servant the title of Executive Director of the Christian Reformed Church will only widen the gap—whether in reality or perception.

II. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures synod

A. That the decision of Synod 2004 for the new chief executive position to be called Executive Director of the Christian Reformed Church be revised (see Church Order Art. 31).

Grounds:

This title:

1. Is incompatible with the role of any officeholder in the church.
2. Is incompatible with the servant character of all offices in the church.
3. Serves to symbolize and to compound rather than to help bridge the (perceived or real) gap between denominational structures and officials and local congregations.

B. That synod adopt the following title for the new chief executive position: General Secretary of the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

This title:

1. Is in keeping with the nature of office in the church.
2. Accords with the servant character of ecclesial office.
3. Maintains continuity with traditional nomenclature.
4. Symbolically signals the partnership of denominational offices and local congregations.

Classis Toronto

Hendrik P. Bruinsma, stated clerk

Overture 7: Depose the Minister and Elders of First CRC, Toronto

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2005 to depose the minister and elders of First CRC, Toronto.

Grounds:

1. We believe that Synod 2004 erred in its response (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 630) to Overtures 17 and 18 and Appeal 2 by failing to address the most pertinent issue raised by these communications. Synod 2004 did not act because there was no evidence that First CRC, Toronto, had *acted* on the basis of this errant teaching. However, the substantive issue is that First CRC has *affirmed* the practice of homosexuals living together in a committed relationship.
2. The clear teaching of the Word of God (Old Testament and New Testament) condemns homosexual fornication as an abomination to the Lord (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and many other passages in the Bible).

The Toronto consistory designates those engaged in frequent homosexual acts with the same partner as “living in committed same-sex relationships.” The consistory further affirmed such relationships by

proposing to nominate persons in such relationships for church office. Although the Toronto church council was restrained from electing persons to church office who are currently engaged in acts of homosexual practice, the *teaching* of the Toronto consistory in this matter remains clearly opposed to the teaching of Scripture.

“Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Form of Subscription, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct” (Church Order Article 83).

3. The integrity of the ministry and mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America depends on our faithful declaration of “the full counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).
4. It is often tempting to avoid the practice of church discipline; however, we confess that “correcting of faults” is one of the marks identifying the true church (Belgic Confession, Article 29).
5. The contradiction of the biblical teaching and the synodical position (Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members) by the teaching of the Toronto consistory is, therefore, a matter that concerns the “churches in common” (Church Order Article 28-b).
6. As of March 2005, Classis Toronto has failed to deal with this matter decisively.

Classis Illiana

Stephan R. Van Eck, stated clerk

Overture 8: Appoint a Study Committee re Improving the Relational Health and Nurture of Marriage and Family Life

I. Background

Statistics, both in our culture and in our denomination, clearly indicate that all is not well in the area of interpersonal relationships. Being faced with a now-chronic 50 percent divorce rate in our society is devastating enough, but what is even more appalling is the fact that we accept such a state of affairs as seemingly normal. There is no outcry in the mainstream news media about this. While a few SARS or Mad Cow cases set alarm bells ringing all over the globe, our disastrous marital and family breakdown has not generated a great deal of public outcry. Sad to say, even the body of believers has become like the frog in cold water that is slowly heated to a boil, for we have gradually become inured to the agonizing marital explosions and meltdowns around us.

If anyone ought to be concerned, it is the Christians who emphasize covenant teaching, because the Hebrew word for covenant means “a loving bond” with God and, therefore, with others. Consequently, it is our covenant community that should be at the forefront in advocating the practical implications of this love-bond approach for society’s well-being and particularly in assisting—with earnestness and insightful competence—the local churches to live out the new life in Christ in all relationships, beginning with our marriages and families.

Like muscles that atrophy if not exercised regularly, loving relationships wither if they are not constantly cultivated and not knowingly nurtured.

Unfortunately, the priorities that feverishly fuel today's society are material well-being and technological advancement. Therefore, we steadily strive for a higher income and are often told to work longer hours so that companies can stay competitive. A distressing result is that we are usually left with less time and less energy for cultivating healthy family relationships.

Moreover, our knowledge of or insight into what constitutes healthy husband-wife, parent-child, and sibling-sibling relationships does not come automatically. Yet, while we are required to pursue years of education and training to prepare for a specific career, we are very inadequately prepared for understanding the nature of character development and the intricacies of interpersonal relationships—knowledge that is so crucial for marriage and parenting. Hence, many of us are poorly prepared for our most foundational task of all: fostering healthy interpersonal relationships at home, at work, and at church. Therefore, if the CRCNA wants to promote healthy congregations, it urgently needs to address this poverty in relational knowledge, wisdom, and skill that frequently saps the vitality of its members, because the stronger and the more wholesome our marital and family relations become the more vibrantly our congregational life will blossom as well.

Finally, during the past year, Dr. Rodger Rice, professor emeritus of Calvin College and the former director of its Social Research Center, conducted a survey in which a total of 178 questionnaires were mailed to a number of Christian Reformed pastors. Three pastors were randomly selected in each classis, except in the case of Classis Holland (USA) and Classis Quinte (Canada). All pastors in these two classes received questionnaires. The results of this selective survey (in which one hundred pastors returned a completed questionnaire, a respectable return rate of 56%) clearly indicated the compelling urgency for providing practical assistance to marriages and families in each local church.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod appoint a study committee to explore:

1. How our churches can best be assisted in developing resources (e.g., local caregiving teams) that put into practice a biblical way to bring relational healing and nurture to persons and families that more than ever are suffering from alienation, loneliness, bitterness, character flaws, abuse, brokenness, addictions, and lack of direction in their lives.
2. How classes and denominational agencies can best assist local churches to train gifted, empathic congregational leaders as caregivers in relational healing and nurture through ministry to individuals and small group gatherings.
3. How the CRCNA can gather available resources; provide new materials by means of denominational publications, Back To God Hour TV programs, or other avenues; and play a coordinating role to strengthen the relational healing and nurture ministries of its classes and its local churches.

B. That this study committee report to Synod 2007 and provide comprehensive recommendations to classes and local churches for improving the relational health and nurture of marriage and family life.

Grounds:

1. Jesus constantly linked proclaiming the kingdom and healing. This dual task of the church is even more crucial today in an age of relational disintegration.
2. Being a covenant community means that we have a loving bond with God as well as with his people. These two relational strands are inseparable, for the one directly influences the other. However, loving relationships need constant nurturing if they are to stay healthy and vigorous. This also means that we must actively seek to promote relational well-being within the marriages and families of our local churches in order that we may become a more vibrant covenant community.
3. This integral proclaiming-and-healing approach within a covenant community also forms the basis for a wholesome word-deed witness to coworkers in our workplaces and to acquaintances in our communities. The healthier and the more joyful we are in our family relationships, the more effective our witness will become. The more relational wisdom we acquire in shaping healthier family life, the more convincing we wounded healers become for colleagues and acquaintances so that they, in turn, will be attracted to our Lord's winsome message of love for God and neighbor.
4. To love others more meaningfully, God's people need to learn how to bind up the brokenhearted by deepening their insights into relational health and by improving their understanding and skill in dealing with emotional anguish and anger as well as in resolving conflict. Paul reminds us in Philippians 1:9-10 (NIV) "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best [also in the area of relationship-building]. . . ."
5. The vitality and exuberance of living the new life in Christ at home and at church is intrinsically connected to the health of our interpersonal relationships. Broken relationships with people easily result in broken relationships with God, for "anyone who does not love his brother [sister, father, mother, husband, wife] whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20 NIV).
6. The recently conducted denominational survey by Dr. Rice reinforces the significance of this overture's recommendations. Some of the foremost needs for which the surveyed pastors desired training were in the areas of marital conflict resolution and parenting issues.
7. This overture is integral to and crucial for developing the healthy-congregations priority and initiative of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, adopted at its meeting of February 26, 2004.

Classis Quinte

Irene Bakker, stated clerk

Overture 9: Develop a Denominationally Supported Fund to Assist with the Cost of Christian Day School Education for the Children of Seminary Students

I. Background

For the past two years, Classis Grand Rapids East has been studying the tuition assistance extended to families who enroll their children in Christian day schools. Tuition in the Grand Rapids Christian Schools has risen steadily and currently is \$5400-\$5500 per child at the elementary and middle school levels and \$6200 at the high school level. A family belonging to a supporting church receives no tuition reduction based on the number of children attending, and thus the cost of Christian day school education is rather substantial. Traditionally, our congregations have established funds to assist member families with these costs. However, as tuition rises and the demographics of congregations change, a number of congregations have experienced difficulty maintaining adequate ministries to their congregations and communities while at the same time assisting members with the cost of Christian day school education. Some congregations, having seen tuition assistance soar to well over 50 percent of their annual budget, have reduced their tuition assistance. Others struggle to offer what support they can but unless alternatives are found, some of our members will not be able to afford a Christian day school education.

Classis is considering a number of ways to address this difficulty. Among possible solutions is the development of a denominationally supported fund to assist Calvin Theological Seminary students who are in the master of divinity program with the cost of sending their children to Christian day schools. Throughout its history, our denomination has valued Christian day schools. Church Order Article 71 says, "The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools in which the biblical, Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall also urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant" (Church Order 2004, p. 19).

The congregations in our classis are temporary homes to a number of students because of our proximity to Calvin Theological Seminary. Generally, these students have limited incomes, and those with school-age children must receive financial assistance if a Christian day school education is to be possible. As the number of older and / or second-career seminary students increases, so does the number of school-age children who must be assisted. Some seminary families are beginning to choose alternatives to Christian day schools in response to financial pressures. Others are choosing to become members of congregations that will grant the most tuition assistance rather than choosing a congregation where they can best serve or learn.

The congregations of our classis will continue to eagerly welcome and embrace seminary students for the few years they are in our area for their studies. We will continue to give these students opportunities for training in various areas of ministry, including preaching. However, we believe the responsibility to assist seminarians with costs incurred when they send their children to Christian day schools should be a denominational responsibility. It should not be a responsibility only of the classes near the seminary or of the students' home classes.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to develop a denominationally supported fund to provide financial assistance to seminarians pursuing master of divinity degrees from Calvin Theological Seminary so these students may be assisted with tuition costs incurred in sending their children to Christian day schools.

Grounds:

1. Christian day school education is valued by our denomination and encouraged by our Church Order.
2. The future leaders of our denomination should model our denomination's commitment to Christian day school education in the educational choices they make for their own children. These choices should not be limited by financial constraints.
3. Because of a variety of factors within the congregations of our classis and within the student population itself, congregations in Classis Grand Rapids East, which extended such assistance in the past, are unable to continue their past level of support.
4. Although seminary students may spend a number of years in the classes near Calvin Theological Seminary, the institution where the majority of our ministers are trained, these future ministers will serve the entire denomination. The denomination, not merely the home classes or the classes geographically near the seminary, should contribute to Christian day school costs of the children of its future ministers.

Classis Grand Rapids East

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 10: Honor Both Convictions Regarding the Use of Women's Gifts

I. Background

A. *The decisions of Synod 1995*

After almost twenty-five years of discussion, our denomination said

There are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister and evangelist.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 731)

Having said that, Synod 1995 permitted all congregations in the denomination to ordain women in the office of elder. In addition, all congregations in a classis that declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative were permitted to ordain women in the offices of minister and evangelist. (What was previously called the office of evangelist is now called ministry associate.) This decision was both painful and positive. A number of congregations left the denomination. A number of others began using the gifts of women in ways that were not possible in the past.

Synod 1995 also adopted regulations that ensured that the denomination's traditional practice of not permitting women to use their gifts in the offices of the church was valued more than the denomination's practice of incorporating women's gifts in ways that attempted to honor the convictions of all its

members (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731). Denominational agencies were not permitted to use women ministers in the work of the kingdom. Congregations who wished to call women ministers were not permitted to do so unless a majority of the delegates in their classis permitted that. Classes were not permitted to delegate women officebearers to synod. Women ministers were not permitted to serve as synodical deputies. Those who were not in favor of the full use of women's gifts were able to prohibit these things because they were in the majority.

B. A dramatic shift

This was a dramatic shift from the way past synods had attempted to honor both convictions in the denomination. When Synod 1957 made a decision about women voting at congregational meetings, it did not say that a congregation could extend the vote to women only if a majority of the congregations in its classis agreed. Rather, it said,

women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men. The question as to whether and when the women members of any church shall be invited to participate in the activities of its congregational meeting is left to the judgment of each consistory.

(*Acts of Synod 1957*, p. 90)

Synod honored the convictions of congregations that wished to extend the vote to women by permitting them to do so. It honored the convictions of congregations that did not wish to extend that privilege by making sure they were not forced to do so. It did not give congregations that did not want to extend the vote to women the authority to prohibit other congregations from doing that because they were in the majority.

The same was true when Synod 1984 allowed consistories to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 655). Synod honored the convictions of congregations that wished to ordain women deacons by permitting them to do so and honored the convictions of congregations that did not wish to ordain women deacons by making sure they were not forced to do so. It did not give congregations who did not wish to ordain women deacons the authority to prohibit other congregations from doing that because they were in the majority.

The same was true when Synod 1995 permitted consistories to ordain women elders. Synod honored the convictions of congregations that wished to ordain women elders by permitting them to do so and honored the convictions of congregations that did not wish to ordain women elders by making sure they were not forced to do so. It did not give congregations who did not wish to ordain women elders the authority to prohibit other congregations from doing that because they were in the majority. Synod specifically said that even classes that had not declared the word *male* in Article 3-a inoperative could not prohibit a church from ordaining women elders.

On a number of other matters, Synod 1995 did not honor both convictions present in the denomination. Its uneven treatment of both convictions was a dramatic shift from the leadership given by synods on similar matters. The even-handed way Synods 1957, 1984, and 1995 dealt with the matters of women voting at congregational meetings and the ordination of women deacons and elders ensured that these issues did not return to synod's agenda. Synod 1995's uneven treatment of both convictions on a number of other

matters guaranteed that these matters would return to synod's agenda again and again until both convictions were honored.

C. The placement of woman ministers by denominational agencies

Synod 2000 revised the 1995 regulation that prohibited denominational agencies from using women ministers in the work of the kingdom. Synod honored the convictions of those who wished women ministers supported by denominational agencies to serve in their classes by permitting such service and honored the convictions of those who did not want such ministers to serve in their classes by prohibiting the agencies from placing them in those classes. This even-handed way of dealing with this matter ensured that it would not return to synod's agenda again.

D. Women synodical deputies

The 2000 review committee also attempted to correct the imbalance pertaining to synodical deputies by recommending,

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the office of elder, minister, and evangelist may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

(*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 385)

This regulation would have honored the convictions of classes that wished to use the gifts of women members by permitting them to elect a women minister to serve as a synodical deputy. It would have honored the convictions of classes that did not wish to use the services of a woman synodical deputy by ensuring that a male alternate would be available. Unfortunately, Synod 2000 did not adopt this even-handed approach, and this matter is again on synod's agenda. The current review committee recommends that synod honor both convictions by permitting a classis to use the gifts of a female minister as a synodical deputy as long as a male minister is the alternate. We encourage synod to adopt this recommendation.

E. The ability of all congregations to call women ministers and ministry associates

Although Synods 1984 and 1995 permitted all congregations to ordain women deacons and elders, Synod 1995 was not willing to extend the same privilege to all congregations with regard to women ministers and ministry associates (formerly, evangelists). This is difficult to understand especially when one observes that some who are not in favor of women's ordination have repeatedly expressed the fear that someday synod will force them to ordain women against their convictions. For the past decade, synod has done what no one wants it to do in the future. It has given classes the authority to force congregations to deny their convictions. In the future, no classis should be permitted to force a congregation to call a female minister or ministry associate when it wishes to call a male. In the present, no classis should be able to force a congregation to call a male minister or ministry associate when it wishes to call a female.

Synod permits congregations who are in classes that do not honor their convictions to call a woman minister or ministry associate to separate themselves from the congregations with whom they minister in their own geographic area and to join another classis miles away. Very few congregations have availed themselves of the option to switch classes, choosing rather to

maintain the bonds that have united them to neighboring congregations for decades in the hope that someday their convictions will be honored.

Synod 2000 took a step in that direction by adopting a new regulation proposed by its review committee (Regulation 4 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a):

If a local congregation, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, desires to call and ordain a female pastor or evangelist but its classis has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, the classis *may* [italics ours] declare an exception to Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed, but it may also make an additional ruling that the female pastor may not be delegated to classis until classis extends an invitation. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in processing ministerial credentials or taking part in a candidate's examination.

(*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 386)

During the discussion of this recommendation, an elder observed that this still allowed classes to prohibit congregations from following their convictions. Synod responded to that observation by substituting the words *is encouraged to* for the word *may* in the new regulation. Although classes were not obligated to do so, they were encouraged to honor the convictions of their member congregations. Since Synod 2000, at least one classis that has not declared the word *male* in Article 3-a inoperative responded positively to that encouragement, examining and approving for ordination a woman chaplain called by one of its congregations.

The current review committee recommends that Regulation 4 be revised so that "women's ordination to all offices [would be] a local option for all congregations" (Ground, F, 1, *Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315). We applaud this recommendation because no classis should have the authority to prohibit a congregation from following its convictions in the calling of its officebearers, and we urge synod to adopt it. We do have some suggestions regarding the revisions made to the regulation. Synods 1984 and 1995 made the offices of deacon and elder local options by saying that all congregations could ordain/install women in those offices while not requiring any congregation to do so. It is more consistent with Reformed church polity for Synod 2005 to say the same about the offices of minister and ministry associate instead of saying that a local council may declare an exception to a Church Order article. We encourage synod to do that.

We also observe that moving an examination to another classis if a quorum cannot be achieved in the classis of the calling church is a rather drastic and unpastoral step. This will exclude from the examination those members of the calling congregation who may wish to witness it as well as officebearers of the congregations with whom the minister or ministry associate will work. It seems better to achieve a quorum in the classis of the calling church by inviting churches from a nearby classis to be part of the examination instead of moving the examination to another classis. We encourage synod to add that option to the review committee's revision of Regulation 4.

F. Women as synodical delegates

1. Further delay recommended

By permitting the delegation of women elders, ministers, and ministry associates to synod, synod would honor the convictions of those who favor the full use of women's gifts in all church offices. By declaring that officebearers will not be forced to participate in synod against their convictions, synod would honor the convictions of those who are unable to serve in a church assembly with women. To date, synod has been unwilling to do that. The current review committee presents two different recommendations on this matter. The majority, all the male members of the committee, recommends that synod continue to prohibit the delegation of women officebearers to synod and revisit this matter when a majority of classes have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative.

2. Grounds 1 and 2

The first two grounds offered by the majority are two sides of the same coin. Ground G, 1 gives the reason why synod should not approve the delegation of women officebearers now: "To date, fewer than half of the classes (46%) have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315). Ground G, 2 gives the reason why synod should revisit this matter soon: "Close to half of the classes have declared the word *male* inoperative" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315). Since the report was written, another classis has declared the word *male* inoperative, bringing the total to 49 percent. When one more classis takes that action, 51 percent of the classes will have declared the word *male* inoperative. That may happen either before Synod 2005 meets or a few months after synod meets.

Although an approach that uses a majority of the classes as a benchmark may be legitimate, there is another factor that should be considered when discussing this matter, namely the important difference between classis and synod. Church Order Article 40-a states, "The council of each church shall delegate a minister and an elder to the classis." A minister and an elder are *obligated* to attend the meetings of classis. This is one of the reasons why some classes have not declared the word *male* inoperative and why the level of support in the classes for the full use of women's gifts cannot be accurately measured by counting how many classes have or have not declared the word *male* inoperative. We are aware of a classis that was ready to declare the word *male* inoperative but decided not to do so in response to the plea of one of its ministers. We have already mentioned a classis that examined and approved for ordination a chaplain called by one of its churches even though it has not declared the word *male* inoperative.

Even though the Church Order *obligates* officebearers to attend classis, no Church Order article *obligates* any officebearer to attend synod. This makes the delegation of women officebearers to synod less problematic than delegation to classis. If a person's convictions do not allow him to participate in synod because women officebearers are present, he is under no obligation to attend. To put unnecessary, and probably unwelcome, pressure on classes to declare the word *male* inoperative so synod may address the delegation of women officebearers to synod is not wise. Synod

should not adopt either of these grounds to delay the approval of delegating women officebearers to synod.

3. Ground 3

In its third ground (G, 3), the majority states, “The results of the survey of councils clearly favor not removing the current restrictions on the delegation of females to synod” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315). This statement is made on the basis of Figure 16 in the survey. The report says,

Similarly, 50 percent of all responding councils expressed the conviction that our denomination could best honor the decision of 1995 by continuing the classical-local option as is (see Appendix, Figure 16). When given various options, a minority of churches were in favor of removing the restrictions that prohibit women from serving as synodical delegates (11% of the councils), or synodical deputies (2%), or by deleting the word *male* and permitting classes to introduce it for their local context (13%).

(*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 310)

The next sentence begins, “It should be noted that councils were asked to mark only one option . . .” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 310). That has a significant impact on how one interprets the data in Figure 16. Also, there is another figure in the survey that has a significant impact on the interpretation of the data described in Figure 16. Figure 14 (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 324), reports the responses of councils to the question, “Suppose that synod were to allow, within the classical-local option, that women may be delegated to synod and classes. How would this affect your church?” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 324). Forty-four percent said this would affect their churches positively (19%) or would have little or no affect (25%) while only 26 percent said this would affect their church negatively. Twenty-two percent said this would have a mixed effect, and 7 percent said they did not know. To turn the descriptive percentages in Figure 16, which already are open to interpretation because councils could indicate only one option, into prescriptions is unwarranted in any case. It is even more unwarranted when Figure 14 shows that the delegation of women officebearers to synod would have a predominantly negative affect on only 26 percent of the churches. Synod should not adopt this ground to delay the approval of delegating women officebearers to synod.

It is sometimes difficult to interpret data, and the temptation always exists to force the data to say what we wish it to say. Figure 14 may not be totally reliable in determining the effect of the delegation of women officebearers to synod because it asks about two assemblies—synod and classis—not merely about synod. This overtone has already indicated that the delegation of women to classis is more problematic than the delegation of women to synod. If this question were asked only about synod, we believe the percentage of churches affected in a predominantly negative way would be even smaller. As the survey results are interpreted, it is also important to note that the majority of people answering the surveys are males, not females. It is significant that all the male members of the review committee do not favor the delegation of women to synod at this time and all the female members do. One can only wonder if the percentage of churches affected in a predominantly negative way would be smaller if congregations, not councils, were asked the question.

4. Ground 4

In its fourth ground (G, 4), the majority states, “A provision at the present time to send female delegates to synod might create a considerable strain in the denomination” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315). Although understandable in light of past division over the use of women’s gifts, this ground is disappointing. It is true that delegating women to synod *might* create considerable strain among us. It is also true that delegating women to synod *will* give the denomination an opportunity to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3) as it finally permits its women members to make full use of their God-given gifts. After thirty-five years of discussion on this matter, Synod 2005 must not cite biblical texts that call God’s people to “let the peace of Christ rule in [their] hearts” (Col. 3:15) while it continues to deny half its membership the opportunity to use their gifts. Synod must expect that God’s people will live out the reality of those texts in their life together and must call the members of the denomination to demonstrate “a spirit of unity among [themselves] as [they] follow Christ Jesus so that with one heart and one mouth [they] may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6). Synod should not wait for one more classis to give leadership on this issue so that sometime in the future synod follows the leadership of the classes. Years ago, one of synod’s presidents told synodical delegates that, as they returned to their churches, they could take either a bucket of gasoline or a bucket of water with them. Synod needs to use the bucket of water. Especially in times of possible strain, synod needs to give proactive spiritual leadership, expecting that the denomination will follow in faith, not in fear. Synod should not adopt this ground to delay the approval of delegating women officebearers to synod.

5. The committee’s mandate unfulfilled by the majority

Synod 2003 instructed the review committee to honor and to be guided by the denomination’s desire to respect both convictions on the use of women’s gifts (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 622). In Recommendation F, the committee fulfills its mandate. As Synods 1957, 1984, and 1995 did with the matters of women voting at congregational meetings and women serving in the offices of deacon and elder, it recommends that synod extend the privilege of calling a woman minister or ministry associate to all congregations.

The committee also fulfills its mandate in Recommendation H. It does not point to Figure 16 to inform synod that the results of the survey of councils clearly favor not removing the current restrictions on the service of women ministers as synodical deputies. Instead, it recommends that synod honor both convictions by ensuring that both males and females will be available as synodical deputies.

In Recommendation G, the majority does not fulfill the committee’s mandate. On the matter of the delegation of women officebearers to synod, it offers no recommendation that honors both convictions. It recommends that synod delay a decision on this matter. The recommended delay is unnecessary because 49 percent of the classes have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative and only 26 percent of the councils

indicate that delegating women officebearers to synod would affect their churches in a predominantly negative way.

Perhaps the majority could convince synod that it might be wise for synod to wait for one more classis to declare the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative before inviting women officebearers to synod. That would raise the percentage of classes that had taken such action to 51 percent instead of 49 percent. However, the majority does not recommend that this be the automatic trigger that extends to all classes the privilege of delegating women officebearers to synod. Instead, it recommends that this be the automatic trigger for more talk about this matter. Another synod will appoint another committee that will take another two years to do another survey so synod can receive a recommendation that will honor both convictions on this matter. Such delay is unnecessary. Synod needs no more data or discussion. Synod needs to demonstrate leadership by making a decision that honors both convictions in our denomination.

6. The committee's mandate fulfilled in the minority report

The recommendation of the minority, all the female members of the review committee, fulfills the mandate of the committee to honor and to be guided by the denomination's desire to respect both convictions in the denomination on the use of women's gifts (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 622). The minority recommends that synod revise Regulation 1 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a to give classes that permit the ordination of women to all church offices the privilege of delegating women officebearers to synod. Although we encourage synod to adopt this recommendation, we also observe that this regulation needs to say something about officebearers who choose not to be delegated to synod because women officebearers will be present. We encourage synod to add the following sentence to the suggested revision: "Classes and synod shall ensure that officebearers will not be forced to participate in synod against their convictions." Because the language of *rights* is more the language of the world than of the church of Christ, we also encourage synod to amend the recommended revision by substituting the words *shall be permitted* for the words *shall* (addition ours) *have the right*.

It is time for this matter to be off synod's agenda. It is time for synod to grant to its women members the privileges that have been withheld from them during our thirty-five year debate without forcing other Christians to deny their convictions. It is time for synod to honor both convictions present in the denomination by inviting the delegation of all ministers and elders to synod and by assuring officebearers who are unable to serve in an assembly with women that they will not be forced to participate against their convictions.

G. *Synodical voting on female seminarians*

Synod 1995 decided that being male was no longer a qualification for entering the ministry in our denomination. Women could enter the gospel ministry if they met the qualifications specified by the denomination. How would synod honor the convictions of those who thought gender should still be a qualification? Would it allow them to vote as if it still was? That would be terribly contradictory. It would also create a grave injustice if a majority of delegates, on the basis of something that was no longer a qualification, denied

candidacy to seminarians who had met every qualification required by the denomination. Thus, Synod 1995 adopted a regulation that said, "In the declaration of candidacy delegates will exercise their right to abstain from voting without pressure or reprisal" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

Although this decision honored both convictions present in the denomination, it was immediately violated. Some delegates who did not favor women's ordination did not want to abstain from voting but wanted instead to vote against certain seminarians on the basis of a qualification that was no longer part of the denominational job description—their gender. Our secular world does not permit such behavior, and those who participate in it are subject to lawsuits. Astonishingly, synod has permitted this behavior for the last ten years and has instituted new ways of voting to accommodate it—ways of voting that it uses only in some declarations of candidacy and nowhere else in its proceedings.

This behavior was most shamefully demonstrated at Synod 1997 when synod separated female seminarians from males even though the seminary faculty and board of trustees informed synod that all seminarians had met every denominational requirement for entering the ministry. Seventeen delegates, unwilling to follow the synodical regulation that called them to abstain from voting, asked that their negative votes against the female seminarians be recorded. Another sixteen delegates asked that their abstentions be recorded, probably the only time in synodical history that abstentions have been recorded (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 603). Votes were not cast against these seminarians because they lacked any qualification required by the denomination. Votes were cast against them on the basis of something that was no longer a denominational requirement for entrance to the gospel ministry, namely their gender. When some objected to such behavior, Synod 1998 instituted yet another way of singling out female seminarians so delegates could vote against them based on a nonqualification, their gender.

Most recently, Synod 2004 separated thirty-one seminarians and declared them candidates singly to give delegates an opportunity to vote against fully qualified individuals based on something that is no longer a qualification for entrance to the gospel ministry (*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 550-51). The same synod granted candidacy to three other women by voting on them in groups with no delegate alleging that his convictions were thereby dishonored (*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 576, 581, 591). These contradictory actions of Synod 2004 illustrate how confused synod is when it votes on declarations of candidacy. The review committee is correct when it states, "The vote on the approval of candidates ought to focus upon whether the prospective candidates have met the denomination's requirements" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 313). Unfortunately, the review committee makes no recommendation on this matter. Synod must not continue the way it currently votes on fully qualified seminarians recommended for candidacy by the seminary faculty and board of trustees. It must interpret Regulation 7 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, "In the declaration of candidacy delegates may exercise their right to abstain from voting," in light of a normal understanding of English and a normal application of synodical voting procedures.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to

A. Revise Regulation 4 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a as follows:

If a local congregation, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, desires to call and ordain a female pastor or ministry associate but its classis has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate, the classis shall grant an exception to Church Order Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in a candidate's examination or in processing ministerial credentials. Examinations for ordination of female members in such classes may be conducted by a classis contracta of churches that do not object. In the event that a quorum cannot be found, churches from a neighboring classis may be invited to achieve a quorum, or a neighboring classis in which the word *male* has been declared inoperative may be asked to conduct the examination.

Grounds:

1. Permitting a congregation to proceed according to its convictions in the calling of a minister or ministry associate while also ensuring that no members of classis will be required to participate in this process against their convictions honors both convictions present in the denomination.
2. Granting a classis the authority to deny the convictions of a member congregation is not desirable in the present and sets an unwanted precedent for the future. No classis should have such authority.
3. It is more consistent with Reformed Church polity to indicate that "the classis shall grant an exception to Church Order Article 3-a" rather than indicating that "a local congregation . . . may declare an exception to Church Order Article 3-a" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 314).
4. The regulation ensures that those who do not favor women's ordination need not participate in an examination or in processing ministerial credentials.
5. Conducting the examination in the classis of the calling church and in the presence of officebearers with whom the minister or ministry associate will work is more pastoral than conducting the examination in another classis.
6. A number of synods have encouraged the church to use the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church as much as possible (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 47; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 43; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700; *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 525-26; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 555; *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 561; *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695).

B. Adopt Recommendation H of the review committee to revise Regulation 2 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a to read:

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate

may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

Grounds:

1. Permitting classes to use the gifts of women ministers as synodical deputies while ensuring that a male alternate is available to classes that choose to be served by male deputies honors both convictions present in the denomination.
2. A number of synods have encouraged the church to use the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church as much as possible (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 47; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 43; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700; *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 525-26; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 555; *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 561; *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695).

C. Revise Regulation 1 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a in the manner recommended by the minority of the review committee so it reads:

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate shall be permitted to delegate women officebearers to synod. Classes and synod shall ensure that officebearers will not be forced to participate in synod against their convictions.

Grounds:

1. Permitting classes to delegate female officebearers to synod while ensuring that male officebearers will not be forced to participate in that assembly honors both convictions present in the denomination.
2. Forty-nine percent of the classes have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative and only 26 percent of the councils indicate that delegating women officebearers to synod would affect their churches in a predominantly negative way.
3. A number of synods have encouraged the church to use the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church as much as possible (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 47; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 43; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700; *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 525-26; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 555; *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 561; *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695).

D. Follow Regulation 7 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, "In the declaration of candidacy delegates may exercise their right to abstain from voting," by voting on seminarians as a group when they are declared candidates.

Grounds:

1. Regulation 7 honors the convictions of delegates who cannot participate in declarations of candidacy by permitting them to abstain.
2. Voting on seminarians as a group honors the current requirements specified by the denomination for candidacy, which are the same for males and females, and does not permit the introduction of something that is no longer a denominational requirement—a seminarian's gender.

3. The only time synod votes on people individually is when it must choose between two or more persons for one position. In all other cases, synod votes for people in groups recommended to it by those charged with ascertaining the qualifications of the members of the groups. This includes the approval of declarations of candidacy and the approval of the ordination of women candidates done by the synodical deputies.

Classis Grand Rapids East

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 11: Request Not to Adopt the Recommendations of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2005 not to adopt the recommendations of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist.

Grounds:

1. We consider the report's failure to include biblical grounds a glaring weakness.
2. According to the committee, their mandate "was not to open recommendations that would marginalize either of the two positions that were acknowledged in 1995." Several of the recommendations do in fact marginalize the position of those who do not approve of women's ordination.
 - a. Recommendation E of the report would cause renewed conflict over women's ordination at a time when the committee reported that the church is "settling down" on this issue. A new education campaign at this time would not only stir up old animosities and tensions but also is likely to obstruct our outreach with bad press at a time when we need to renew our outreach and recover from the losses incurred by the last round of this debate.
 - b. Recommendation F that calls for revision of the Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 4, is particularly offensive. First, it allows for a local congregation to override the decision of its classis with respect to the examination and ordination of a woman candidate. Second, it provides a parliamentary method by which a majority of the churches in a given classis are effectively disenfranchised. Thus, in a classis that has not declared the word *male* inoperative, an examination of a female candidate may be conducted by a "classis contracta" "of churches that do not object." If a quorum cannot be found, a neighboring, more sympathetic classis may conduct the examination. A proposal such as this is analogous to a council's calling a congregational meeting to vote on a new building project and then informing the congregation that only those who are in favor of this proposal are invited to attend the meeting and, if a

quorum cannot be obtained, a neighboring congregation may vote in favor of this proposal.

The Church Order (Art. 85) in its conclusion insists that “no church shall in any way lord it over another church.” Churches already have the right to affiliate with another more sympathetic classis if they favor calling a woman pastor. They should exercise that right. The procedure advocated by the committee allows for the tyranny of the minority. Classical decisions have always been reached by a majority vote. To subvert that parliamentary principle to achieve one’s ends displays an utter insensitivity to the way fellow believers deal with one another in an ecclesiastical context.

- c. Recommendation H also continues to push the envelope in favor of those who favor women in office. While apparently harmless because it always makes sure that an alternate male deputy is also available, in practical terms it is not likely to work that way. In our experience, we frequently are compelled to call upon alternate deputies because the primary deputy is not available. If the male deputy is not available, a classis would be compelled to choose between calling on the female deputy or telling a candidate that he must wait for his examination.
3. The statistical data that the committee collected had low turnout and did not adequately demonstrate the wisdom of their recommendations. Apart from its questionable accuracy, their presentation of the statistical information is misleading.
 - a. A 52 percent response rate by the churches demonstrates a poor sample and the relative disinterest in changing the current state of affairs.
 - b. The method of presentation of the statistical data in the report, however, is stated in such a way as to enhance the significance of the results. The results reflect only the survey, not actual numbers. For example, 3 percent of the congregations that responded reported having a woman minister. Currently there are a total of twenty-seven ordained women. Eight are serving churches, ten are chaplains, one is a missionary, and eight are serving in various capacities such as being employed by Calvin Theological Seminary. There are a total of 1025 congregations in the CRC as of 2004. After ten years, less than 0.8 percent are served by ordained women.
4. The adoption of this report and its recommendations will be detrimental to the spiritual life of the churches and to their ability to work together for common goals and purposes.
 - a. If it is true that 42 percent of the councils responding say that this issue is still “very/somewhat divisive” in their congregations (Figure 4) and that 39 percent of the classes say the same thing (Figure 17), adopting the recommendations of the committee will only serve to deepen divisions and reopen old wounds
 - b. Our past debates on this issue severely undermined the ministry-share system that undergirds our joint ministry. While other factors may also play a role in that erosion, reopening these divisive issues has the potential to undermine ministry shares further and to hamper our ability to support the missionaries, colleges, and other work we share in common.

- c. If it is true that 58 percent of the classes responding desire to leave things as they are (Figure 24), we would urge synod to do exactly that by rejecting the recommendations of the committee.

Classis Illiana

Stephan R. Van Eck, stated clerk

Overture 12: Reject the Report and Recommendations of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Option re Women in Office

Classis Pella overtures synod to reject the report and recommendations of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Option with Respect to Women Serving in the Offices of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist and retain the identical rules and responsibilities for men and women in the denomination as have been in existence for the past decade.

Grounds:

1. Under the committee's Recommendation F, it states: "Examinations for ordination of female members in a classis in which the word *male* in Article 3-a has not been declared inoperative may be conducted by a classis contracta of churches that do not object. In the event that a quorum cannot be found, a neighboring classis in which the word *male* has been declared inoperative may be asked to conduct the examination. The classis to which the congregation belongs is to decide whether the female pastor may be delegated to classis by way of exception." Synod 2000 (as recorded in Acts of Synod 2000, p. 668) adopted the following regulation regarding a contracted classis meeting:

That synod declare that any classical decision requiring the concurrence of the synodical deputies be made in the presence of delegates from all the churches in which the action is being taken. If a classis contracta is necessary because of justifiable circumstances, a contracted classis shall never be convened with *fewer than half* [italics added] the churches represented. A quorum for a classis contracta shall be half the churches of a classis plus one.

That which is being proposed under the committee's Recommendation F exceeds and expands the intent of a classis contracta and would produce a further atmosphere of congregationalism or independentism among our churches.

2. At the present time, there exists among our churches a *mutual respect for Scripture* despite strong opinions about what it teaches concerning the roles and duties of both men and women. Over the last decade, we have agreed to disagree on the more difficult passages; out of respect for Scripture, we overture synod to make no changes.
3. At the present time, there exists among us a *mutual respect for one another* that produces an ability to live with each other in harmony and that results in a commitment to expand God's kingdom around the world. Movement to expand the roles and duties as recommended by the study committee may result in a further fracture of our denomination.
4. At the present time, there exists among us a *mutual respect for Synod* and while the decision of Synod 1995 remains difficult for many members of our churches, in love and humility these have stayed loyal to the denomi-

nation they hold dear in their hearts. As such, we implore those advocating expansion of the role of women to permit the Holy Spirit to heal us by seeking *no additional* changes, while, at the same time, we implore those desiring a lesser role for women to permit the same Holy Spirit to continue to heal the denomination by not seeking to reverse Synod 1995's decision.

Classis Pella

Jack Gray, stated clerk

Overture 13: Not Adopt Certain Recommendations of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist

I. Introduction

Classis Minnkota is on record as opposing the decision of Synod 1995 to allow classes and churches to declare that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a is inoperative. We believe that decision is in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order. Accordingly, in 1996 we overtured synod to revise the decision of 1995 and delete the Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a (Overture 21, *Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 264-66). In 2000, we overtured synod to reaffirm the position of Synod 1994 re women in office and to remove the Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a (Overture 5, *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 455-59).

We continue to be opposed to the decision of Synod 1995. At this point in time, however, we consider it unlikely that the 1995 decision will be overturned. Therefore, instead of overturing synod to return to the position of Synod 1994, we wish to voice our concerns about some of the recommendations in the report of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist. These recommendations further expand the role of women in ecclesiastical office. They would make the present "compromise" even less tolerable for those of us in the Christian Reformed Church who are opposed to having women serve in ecclesiastical office.

II. A review of the study committee's recommendations

A. Recommendation B

In Recommendation B, the study committee recommends "that synod encourage the churches to make use of the gifts of women, including invitations to ordained women to preach and licensed women to exhort in those congregations where it is permitted." We have no objection to encouraging the churches to make use of the gifts of women. However, we are convinced that it is contrary to Scripture to allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man in the church (1 Tim. 2:12-14). Consequently, it is contrary to Scripture for congregations to permit or to invite ordained women to preach or licensed women to exhort. The second ground of this recommendation implies that for some churches it is possible to "make full use of women's gifts" only if they invite women to preach or exhort. We deny that this is the case. This recommendation is unnecessary, and we urge synod not to adopt it.

B. Recommendation D

The study committee's concern in Recommendation D is to make the ordination and installation forms gender inclusive. It argues that doing this is "consistent with the denomination's position that allows women's ordination as a local option." If, however, women's ordination is a *local* option, then altering the forms to make their language gender inclusive should also be done on the *local* rather than on the denominational level.

C. Recommendation E

The study committee's Recommendation E calls for synod to take several steps to support ongoing efforts to educate the churches regarding the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. We have little enthusiasm for such "ongoing educational efforts" and believe that our limited denominational financial resources would be better spent in other ways.

D. Recommendation F

In Recommendation F, the study committee recommends a revision of Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 4. Regulation 4 deals with the case of a local congregation that desires to call and ordain a female pastor or ministry associate when its classis has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in office. The present regulation states that "the classis is encouraged to declare an exception to Church Order Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed." The recommended revision of Regulation 4 does not speak of the classis declaring an exception to Article 3-a. Instead it says that "the council may declare an exception to Church Order Article 3-a to allow the church to proceed." The recommendation further states that "no members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in a candidate's examination or in processing ministerial credentials. Examinations for ordination of female members in a classis in which the word *male* in Article 3-a has not been declared inoperative may be conducted by a *classis contracta* of churches that do not object. In the event a quorum cannot be found, a neighboring classis in which the word *male* has been declared inoperative may be asked to conduct the examination. The classis to which the congregation belongs is to decide whether the female pastor may be delegated to classis by way of exception."

This recommendation might conceivably be workable in a classis in which a number of churches held positions on either side of the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. In a classis like ours, it appears to be totally unworkable. If one of our churches called a female candidate, there would be no quorum to conduct an examination. According to the proposed regulation, another classis would have to be found to examine the candidate. Our historic right and responsibility as a classis to examine candidates for the ministry in our churches would be removed. The proposed regulation is in direct conflict with Church Order Article 10-a, which states that "the ordination of a candidate for the ministry of the Word requires the approval of the classis of the calling church and of the synodical deputies."

In the event that a female pastor, serving in one of our churches, accepted a call in another classis, it is probable that signing and forwarding the ecclesiastical credential would be contrary to the convictions of our classical interim committee. Are we to assume that the committee of another classis, which has no knowledge of the church or pastor, would sign and forward the credential?

If one of our churches called a female pastor, other practical issues would arise. It is possible that the church's counselor would not in good conscience be able to sign the letter of call. The female pastor would in all probability not be nominated to serve on classical committees, would not receive classical appointments, and would be unable to participate in classical pulpit exchanges. Synod has already made it possible for a church to transfer to another classis. The Supplement to Church Order Article 39 states that "any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity." We judge that if a church wishes to call a female pastor or ministry associate and the church's classis is unwilling to declare an exception to Article 3-a, that church would do well to transfer to a classis in which the word *male* in Article 3-a has been declared inoperative.

Because of our opposition to having women serve in ecclesiastical office, we would like to see the entire Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a removed. If it is to remain, then for all of the above reasons, we believe synod should not adopt the study committee's Recommendation F.

E. Recommendation G and the minority recommendation

Because we believe it is unbiblical for women to serve in ecclesiastical office, we oppose having female officebearers delegated to synod. The committee's Recommendation G is "that synod revisit the issue of female delegates to synod at such a time when a majority of classes has declared the word *male* inoperative." In our view, the issue of female delegates to synod should not be revisited at any time. The present Regulation 1 of the Supplement to Article 3-a, B states that: "A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not, out of consideration for the conviction of other classes, delegate women officebearers to synod." The convictions of classes that oppose having women serve in ecclesiastical office should be considered, whether they are in the majority or not. A minority of the committee recommends revising Regulation 1 to read: "A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate have the right to delegate women officebearers to synod." This completely ignores the conviction of those classes that are opposed to women in ecclesiastical office.

It is already a challenge to find elders willing to serve as synodical delegates. We expect that a significant number of both ministers and elders who conscientiously object to women in ecclesiastical office would be unwilling to be delegated to a synod that included female delegates. If women were delegated to synod, our relationship with the denomination would grow weaker than it already is.

F. Recommendation H

In Recommendation H, the study committee is recommending a change in Regulation 2 of Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B. The change would allow classes that permit women in office to appoint a female minister to serve as a synodical deputy "as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate." This, again, is a step in the direction of expanding the role of women in ecclesiastical office, which we oppose, and it could have the effect of reducing the number of synodical deputies available to classes that are opposed to having women serve in ecclesiastical office.

III. Overture

In light of these observations regarding the recommendations of the Committee to Review the Classical-Local Options with Respect to Women Serving in the Office of Minister, Elder and Evangelist, Classis Minnkota overtures synod:

A. Not to adopt Recommendation B of the committee's report, which concerns encouraging invitations to women to preach and exhort.

Grounds:

1. Previous synods have already urged councils and classes to make use of the gifts of women.
2. Making full use of women's gifts does not require inviting them to preach or exhort, because it is not biblical for women to teach or have authority over men in the church (1 Tim. 2:12-14).

B. Not to adopt Recommendation D of the committee's report, which calls for a review of the ordination and installation forms to make the language gender inclusive.

Ground: If women's ordination is a local option, then altering the forms to make their language gender inclusive should also be done on the local rather than on the denominational level.

C. Not to adopt Recommendation E of the committee's report, which asks synod to support ongoing educational efforts on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office.

Ground: Our limited denominational financial resources would be better spent in other ways.

D. Not to adopt Recommendation F of the committee's report, which would revise Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, B, Regulation 4.

Grounds:

1. The proposed regulation could potentially remove from some classes their historic right and responsibility to examine candidates for the ministry in their constituent churches.
2. The proposed regulation is in direct conflict with Article 10-a of the Church Order, which states that "the ordination of a candidate for the ministry of the Word requires the approval of the classis of the calling church and of the synodical deputies."
3. The proposed regulation would create many practical difficulties in classes in which a large majority of the churches cannot in good conscience accept women in ecclesiastical office.
4. Synod has made it possible for a church that wishes to call a female pastor to transfer to another classis. The Supplement to Church Order Article 39 states that "any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity."

E. Not to adopt Recommendation G of the committee's report or the minority's recommendation regarding women delegates to synod.

Grounds:

1. The conviction of classes opposed to women in office should be considered, no matter how few in number those classes are.
2. We expect that a significant number of both ministers and elders who conscientiously object to women in ecclesiastical office would be unwilling to be delegated to a synod that included female delegates.

F. Not to adopt Recommendation H of the committee's report regarding appointing female ministers to serve as synodical deputies.

Ground: Appointing female ministers to serve as synodical deputies could have the effect of reducing the number of synodical deputies available to classes that are opposed to having women serve in ecclesiastical office.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 14: Reject Recommendations B, C, F, and K of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod

Classis Pella overtures synod to reject the following recommendations of the Study Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod:

1. Recommendation B: That synod adopt the following goal: That by Synod 2011, all classes will delegate a least one minority to synod each year.

Grounds:

- a. It is the *local* classis' responsibility to delegate to synod *qualified* ministers and elders as it deems proper—not on an ethnic basis only. Anyone chosen by a classis to represent that classis at synod should be selected only on the basis of *qualification*—not on some artificially created basis.
 - b. It would be unfair to the local classis to misrepresent its constituents just to fulfill a mandate by synod.
 - c. The report falsely accuses local classes of intentionally not incorporating ethnic minorities (section B of the study committee's report).
2. Recommendation C: That synod encourage each classis to include at least one ethnic minority in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006.

Ground: It is the local classis' responsibility to delegate to synod qualified ministers and elders as it deems proper, not on an ethnic basis only.

3. Recommendation F: That synod permit, by way of exception, the delegation of ethnic minority deacons to its meetings.

Ground: Delegating deacons to synod has not been approved by any synodical action. Some classes have not yet permitted deacons to be seated as regular delegates from their churches at classical meetings. Until we have a common consensus that deacons should or must be seated at the classical level, we should not consider having them dele-

gated to the synodical level just to “enlarge the pool of ethnic minorities available for delegation to synod.”

4. Recommendation K: That Synod 2009 appoint a small committee (or instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee) to report to Synod 2010 on adjustments that may be necessary to attain the goal of an ethnic minority delegate from each classis if it appears that the denomination will not achieve that goal at Synod 2011.

Ground: Incorporation of ethnic minorities should come from a natural process rather than being mandated.

Classis Pella

Jack Gray, stated clerk

Overture 15: Highlight Recommendation C and Reject Recommendation B of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod

Classis Eastern Canada overtures Synod 2005 to highlight Recommendation C and not to accede to Recommendation B of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod (that by Synod 2011 all classes will delegate at least one ethnic minority to synod each year).

Grounds:

1. Church Order Article 45 states, “Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to the synod.” By ruling on the composition of a classical delegation to synod, synod is limiting the freedom of classes to send the delegates of their choice.
2. The timeline of 2011 is unrealistic. In many classes that have a homogeneous, ethnic heritage, outreach to other ethnic groups is just beginning. Moreover, because many of the ethnic groups in Canada are comprised of relatively new immigrants who have formed tightly knit communities, it will take more than a few years to become effective in outreach to these communities and still more years to raise leaders from among the new converts.
3. This recommendation will be difficult to enforce. How will synod penalize classes who are unable to meet this requirement?
4. As indicated by the report, visible minorities comprise at present 5.8 to 7.4 percent of the CRC denomination and would then have representation of 25 percent at synod.
 - a. This brings a very practical concern for our classis. Of those in our churches considered to be a visible minority, how many serve as elder? Of that number how many are available to attend synod? If that number is low, how many are prepared to serve consecutive terms in office so that they may be delegated to synod on a regular basis?
 - b. In our classis (at present), there are no ethnic (visible) minority pastors; thus, it is inherent that one of the two elders must (should) be from an ethnic minority. Thus, at present, the elder delegates must be

50 percent ethnic (visible) minority. If the trend is to force a quota of visible minority elders, what of visible minority pastors?

Classis Eastern Canada
James Kooistra, stated clerk

Overture 16: Reject the Recommendations of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod not to accede to the recommendations of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod.

Grounds:

1. The committee has stepped outside of its mandate. Mandate 4 is “to recommend to Synod 2005 whether to continue the practice of appointing ethnic advisers and/or to suggest any modification of that practice.” The committee has gone beyond suggesting a modification of the practice of having ethnic advisers. They are recommending a whole new stronger plan to make sure there are more multiethnic delegates to synod.
2. The committee states in their report, “In December 2002, our Race Relations agency estimated that 5.8 to 7.4 percent of our members are ethnic minorities. Thus, in the last eight years (1997-2004), ethnic minorities have been represented at synod at a level equal to or greater than the percentage of ethnic minorities in the denomination.” Ethnic minority representation has increased from 3.3 percent in 1995 to 6.4 to 9.6 percent in 2004. There currently is a good and increasing representation at synod.
3. The criteria of 25 percent representation of ethnic minorities is unreasonable and impractical. Should 25 percent of the delegates represent about 5 percent of the denominational make-up? The representation of the majority of the denomination would be grossly reduced.
4. The criteria of one delegate from each classis is unreasonable. Many classes, our classis for example, are in an area where the ethnic minority representation is very low.
5. The committee’s recommendations have little regard for the qualifications of the synodical delegates. Synod is the highest decision-making body of the CRC, and those that compose synod have a major responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. The committee is suggesting that deacons and possibly others could be delegates to synod. Men should not be selected as delegates just to meet an ethnic quota; they should be well-qualified leaders in the church.
6. The committee’s recommendations have strong statements and recommendations that propose to force each classis to have ethnic representation. The committee recommends that actions will be taken if a classis does not have an ethnic minority delegate in 2010. Direction of the denomination can rarely be forced upon congregations.

7. The committee report indicates that by forcing the classes to have one ethnic minority delegate each, the classes will then be more motivated to include ethnic minority participation in their meetings. Additionally, the congregations will have to get ethnic minorities in leadership positions, which means they will have to have ethnic minority members, thus requiring them to bring ethnic minorities into the church. This is exactly the opposite of how development should take place. It is outcome-based, not ministry focused.
8. We as a denomination have been ministering to minorities, as well as special-needs people and single-parent families, and we need to continue to do so more and more. The love of Christ and seeking to build his kingdom should be our heart's desire, not the striving to attain a man-made goal.
9. The nature of the action of Synod 1995 was to encourage, not legislate multiethnic delegates at synod.
10. The government of the CRC is through the local congregations. Council members delegated to synod represent the congregations in their classis in the decision making of the CRC. The committee is presenting their recommendations from a denominational authoritative perspective rather than from a congregation representative perspective.

Classis of the Heartland recognizes the importance of reaching out to ethnic minorities. It is not our intent to deter but to encourage ministry with minorities and expect that in time that will result in increased representation at synod and on denominational boards. Classis Heartland seeks to minister to the many who are in need of a relationship with Jesus.

Classis of the Heartland
Dale Fopma, stated clerk

Overture 17: Not Adopt Recommendation B of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod

I. Background

Synod of 2003 appointed a Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers to Synod (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 622). Mandate 4 states: "To recommend to Synod 2005 whether to continue the practice of appointing ethnic advisors and / or to suggest any modification of that practice." Classis Southeast U.S. supports committee recommendations C, D, and E, which encourage and promote diversity representation within classes and synod, a practice that Classis Southeast U.S. has followed for years. However, we are convinced that in Recommendation B the committee has exceeded the instructions given it from synod. The committee has collected data that suggest the practice may no longer be necessary.

II. Overture

Classis Southeast U.S. overtures synod to not adopt Recommendation B of the committee, "That synod adopt the following goal: That by Synod 2011, all classes will delegate at least one ethnic minority to synod each year" (Section VII).

Grounds:

1. This recommendation of the committee to synod is based on the assumption that today's classes and classes of the future are not and will not reflect the ethnic diversity present within them.
2. This recommendation that synod dictate to a classis whom it must appoint to represent it at synod is contrary to our form of church government. Historically, our experience in Classis Southeast U.S. has been that classis models the growing diversity and ethnic variety reflected in our denomination. Delegates to synod and denominational appointees from Classis Southeast U.S. have reflected our ethnic diversity in a genuine and affirming fashion.

Classis Southeast U.S.

Daniel J. Cooke, stated clerk

Communication 1: Classis Iakota

I. Background

Beginning in 1995, synod acted to rapidly increase the influence of ethnic diversity at synod. That synod approved appointing seven members of various ethnic communities to serve as advisers to synod. These ethnic advisers were appointed to a five-year term. In 2000, this practice was extended for an additional five years with the expectation that Synod 2003 would assign a committee to review the original goals and practices and make recommendations to Synod 2005.

Historical data show that the inclusion of minority delegates increased from 1.6 percent in 1994 to a range of 6.4 to 9.6 percent during the years 1997 to 2004. The more recent percentages represent the presence of 12-18 ethnic minorities among 188 total delegates. The committee raises the question, "Is the number large enough so that the many ethnic communities in the denomination are represented? Is the number large enough to create a critical mass so that ethnic minorities do not feel overwhelmed by the Anglo majority?"

The committee attempts to answer this question by making several observations: Currently, the ethnic minority membership in our denomination is 5 percent. U.S. Census Bureau projections indicate that the U.S. population is projected to be 52.3 percent nonwhite by 2050. Finally, a majority of our classes, 28 of 47, have not delegated a single ethnic minority for the past nine years.

By means of a survey of various constituencies, the committee attempted to answer the question of whether participation by ethnic minorities as advisers served to "affirm a sense of CRC ownership by various ethnic communities." The answer was that while "service as an adviser increased the sense of ownership for those who actually served as ethnic advisers, it has not produced a corresponding sense of ownership in ethnic minority congregations." However, the addition of ethnic advisers "to the few ethnic minority synod delegates has been a beneficial experience for those delegates" (Table 6 – the question asked makes it difficult to determine if this is the correct interpretation of the data).

The report then considers whether Synod 2005 should continue the position of minority adviser for another five years. The analysis provided by the committee is that while the position was less helpful than first envisioned, it still has had a number of positive effects that have benefited the entire denomination. However, minority advisers were one among several actions taken by the denomination as a whole, each of which have contributed in ways that are difficult to separate from the positive influences of other denominational actions.

Despite the findings detailed above, few councils or committees would disagree with the statement: "The position of ethnic adviser should be continued." So the question remains: What can be done to address our denomination's desire to incorporate ethnic minorities into every facet of denominational life?

II. Recommendations of the committee

The committee has made a number of helpful recommendations suggesting that we encourage the development of minority participants in the local classes. However, the primary goal identified by this committee is: "ask each class to ensure that 25 percent of its delegation, one of its four delegates, be an ethnic minority." This is specifically addressed in Recommendation B: "That synod adopt the following goal: That by Synod 2011 all classes will delegate at least one ethnic minority to synod each year."

III. Considerations for synod

While the goal of greater minority participation (or perhaps a greater awareness of, sensitivity to, and active ministry within minority communities) is laudable, we are troubled by the remedy suggested. We recommend that synod consider carefully the wisdom and implications of the very specific goal stated in Recommendation B.

We have three major concerns. First, if representation and deliberation is solely a matter of numerical strength, then we have fallen into the model of the world in attempting to discern with wisdom the issues faced by our denomination. The CRC synod is not designed to provide proportional representation in deliberative matters. We believe that we need to consider how each delegate, regardless of disabilities, socioeconomic background, education, political leanings, and so forth, is equipped to search Scripture and follow the leading of the spirit in the deliberations of synod. By quantifying compliance or progress on this single attribute of race, we minimize other important aspects, experiences, and characteristics of the body. If this is to be our model, should we not also then suggest greater representation by the disabled, the poor, and other underrepresented populations?

Second, the report seems to suggest that a greater voice will be afforded minority delegates if they are present in greater numbers. This assumes that minority delegates (Pacific Islanders, Native American, African American, Cuban American, Mexican American, Asian American, and so forth) have a greater commonality among themselves than with the nonminority delegates in regard to issues facing the denomination.

Third, we do believe that the committee has correctly identified the work that must be done at the denominational and classical levels. The committee also recognizes that the pool of ethnic minorities is not very large in some classes. However, rather than focusing on the pool of people eligible for delegation to synod, our focus ought to be on growing congregations in which minorities feel at home. Our focus as a denomination, consisting of 5 percent ethnic minorities, should be to capture a vision of the great commission within the communities around us.

Classis Iakota
Roger Sparks, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Iakota

Classis Iakota endorses the recommendations of the Committee to Study Restorative Justice.

Grounds:

1. The principles of restorative justice as presented in the report are clearly biblical.
2. The practices of restorative justice as described in the report provide practical opportunities for churches (and their members) to serve as a Christian influence within local communities and within the justice system.

Classis Iakota
Roger Sparks, stated clerk

Communication 3: Classis Heartland

Classis of the Heartland sends this communication to Synod 2005 concerning the report of the Committee to Study Church Education. We very much appreciate all the work and study that has gone into this report, and we appreciate most of the recommendations. However, we would also ask that Synod 2005 consider the following:

1. Recommendation E

Recommendation E seems to imply more than what Church Order Supplement, Article 51-a states, which is:

- a. Synod affirms the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and encourages existing congregations to continue and new congregations to embrace this tradition for the building up of the body of Christ.
- b. Where congregations are exploring alternatives to the second service, synod encourages those congregations to ensure that such alternatives are part of a strategic ministry plan with full accountability to their classis.

We question whether Ground 2 of this recommendation is valid. This recommendation seems to encourage a weakening of the second service as a worship service with the preaching of the Word. We judge that it would be better if, along with this recommendation, there was also the suggestion for congregations to consider ways of strengthening their Sunday morning education time or to consider an education time during the week.

2. Recommendation G

We wonder if it would be better to have the recommended position of discipleship specialist initiate the development of an annual Institute of Discipleship rather than the Board of Trustees.

3. Recommendation I

We agree with the recommendation, but how does synod suggest we accomplish this? The report indicates that families and churches are slipping and that our Christian schools are picking up some of the slack. It cautions against this. Will the denomination provide resources to help accomplish this recommendation?

Thank you for the privilege of voicing our concerns regarding this report. We hope that synod may discern our sincere hope that the educational ministries of our congregations be strengthened through the discussion of this report.

Classis of the Heartland
Dale Fopma, stated clerk

Communication 4: Council of Maranatha CRC, Woodbridge, Ontario

I. Introduction

Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Woodbridge, Ontario, is extremely concerned about Classis Toronto's unwillingness to require that officebearers of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario, give an account of their approach to pastoral care in the face of strong evidence that this council endorses committed same-sex relationships.

Grounds:

1. There is strong evidence that the council of First CRC endorses committed same-sex relationships (see Background below).
2. On the basis of Scripture, our synodical guidelines state that "explicit homosexual practice must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 52).
3. Synod 2002 recommended to the churches for their use a report regarding ministry to persons with same-sex attractions (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 313-51). Pages 321-24 of this report opens Scripture as it applies to the question of endorsing committed relationships for persons who experience same-sex attraction. It concludes that self-control is not only a gift of the Spirit, and a fruit of the Spirit but also a command to be obeyed.
4. In 1975, synod stated: "synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confessions, and they 'shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order' (Article 29). All office-bearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44).
5. Belgic Confession, Article 29 offers no exemption for homosexual sin when it states:

As for those who can belong to the church, we can recognize them by the distinguishing marks of Christians: namely by faith, and by their fleeing from sin and pursuing righteousness, once they have received the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. They love the true God and their neighbors,

without turning to the right or the left, and they crucify the flesh and its works. Though great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their lives, appealing constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of the Lord Jesus, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins, through faith in him.

6. The Heidelberg Catechism also offers no exemption for homosexual sin when it states in Question and Answer 87:

Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways?

A. . . . no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like is going to inherit the kingdom of God.

II. Background

First CRC of Toronto has been working through issues of homosexuality and Christian faith since the 1970s. A brief history made available by the church council¹ indicates that there was a support group meeting in First CRC since the 1980s and, in 1996, a Committee on Gay / Lesbian Members in our Fellowship was formed. All of this may have represented a good and healthy attempt to carry on gospel work, but the same notes indicate some of the struggle First CRC was experiencing over what direction such ministry should take. They state: "At about this time Council prepared a list of nominees for office which included several members of the congregation who were known to be in committed homosexual relationships, though before the list was finally presented to the congregation, those members' names were removed."

In 2001, the congregation faced a crisis. Council recommended that the congregation call a pastor "who had been a minister in the CRC in the U.S.A., whose ministerial credentials had lapsed two years after his congregation was informed of his homosexuality and he stepped down, though he continued to live by the denomination's guidelines."² Seventy percent of the congregation had voted in favor of extending the call, but the council had set the threshold at seventy-five percent. The call was not extended. This caused a deepening of conflict within the congregation. A committee called the Group Working to Increase Dialogue on Gay and Lesbian Inclusion at First CRC was appointed to arrange discussion, review synodical reports, and revisit previous reports on inclusivity that had been prepared.

In this context, on October 14, 2001, while being interviewed for a call to First CRC, Pastor Nick Overduin stated that he was principally in favor of gay bonding ceremonies.³ He qualified this by saying he would also work within denominational guidelines. Subsequently, Rev. Overduin received and accepted the call to First CRC.

¹"Some historical notes on Inclusivity at First CRC Toronto" The letter from First CRC included with the May 23, 2003, agenda for classis indicated that this document was available upon request.

²Ibid.

³Pastor Overduin confirmed the veracity of these statements at a meeting between representatives of the council of First CRC and the council of Maranatha CRC. This meeting was requested by Maranatha CRC and took place on September 21, 2002.

On June 10, 2002, the council adopted a report from The Group Working to Increase Dialogue. This report included a recommendation of pastoral support for the committed relationships of, among others, gay and lesbian members.⁴ Building on this, there was also a recommendation to consider nominations of gay and lesbian members, including those living in committed relationships, for all elected offices. These recommendations were approved at a congregational meeting on September 29, 2002, reaffirmed by the council on October 7 and communicated through an Open Pastoral Letter to Our Brothers and Sisters in Classis Toronto, October 10, 2002.

By way of overtures, two churches asked the January 23, 2003, meeting of Classis Toronto to respond. At this meeting, a retired former pastor of First CRC pleaded that First CRC be permitted to continue to enjoy the blessings that had been received through leadership and ministry of various kinds given by persons living in committed same-sex relationships. Classis however responded with deep concern.

Initially, this concern was directed not only to the matter of the nomination of persons living in same-sex relationships to ecclesiastical office but also to the pastoral care for persons in such relationships. On January 23, 2003, classis decided:⁵

1. To urge the Council of First CRC to repent of their action affirming the validity of committed same-sex relationships.
2. To urge the Council of First CRC to rescind their decision to consider nominations of those living in committed same-sex relationships for all elected offices.
3. To urge the Council of First CRC to minister to gays and lesbians according to the biblical teaching and pastoral guidelines outlined in the synodical reports relating to homosexuality of 1973 and 2002.

Classis also asked First CRC to publish a response to these urgings in the agenda for the May 23, 2003, meeting of classis.

The response of First CRC, presented with the agenda for the May 23, 2003, meeting of classis, gave no specific answer to any of the January urgings. In fact, First CRC reported that “arriving at a clear decision on full inclusion brought a measure of internal peace”⁶ to the congregation.⁷ Instead of responding specifically to the January urgings, First CRC offered to prepare a document that would articulate their position and present “a pastoral framework for ministry with people of same-sex orientation.”

This response of First CRC motivated two congregations to ask Classis Toronto to exercise special discipline. One overture called for the removal of

⁴The first recommendation was the adoption of a statement that included the following, “We the people of First CRC of Toronto are committed to embrace people of all ages, races, genders, sexual orientation. . . .” The second recommendation committed the church to “support with sensitive pastoral care the implications, for all the members of our church and their committed relationships, of the adoption of the above statement.”

⁵Article 21, Minutes of Classis Toronto, January 23, 2003.

⁶Included with Agenda for Classis Toronto, May 23, 2003.

⁷A significant number of people who had been uncomfortable with the decisions of the fall of 2002 no longer worshiped at First CRC.

First CRC from the denomination, the other called for the discipline of officers who had endorsed the controversial decisions.⁸ At the May 23, 2003, classis meeting, the delegates also received a new communication from the council of First CRC that notified them: "Having already decided not to nominate persons in committed same gender relationships for this year, and consistent with our expressed deep desire to remain part of the Christian Reformed denomination, we decided to further defer such nominations."⁹

Classis Toronto took no definitive action on these matters on May 23, 2003. A final decision was postponed until June 25.

After this time, Classis Toronto did not sustain its concern regarding First CRC's affirmation of the validity of committed same-sex relationships. Instead, Classis Toronto contented itself with a focus on the matter of nominations of persons living in committed same sex relationships to ecclesiastical office. Because First CRC gave indication that it would not act on such nominations, Classis Toronto has reflected significantly less concern.

The June 25, 2003, meeting of Classis Toronto received a communication from First CRC expressing regret that it did not bring its decisions to Classis Toronto at an earlier time. It committed again to "refrain from acting on our earlier decision 'to nominate gay and lesbian members living in committed relationships' for elected office."¹⁰ It also reiterated its offer to prepare a study report. To this, Classis Toronto responded by saying that it "accepts First CRC's response as meeting the urgings of Classis Toronto in January 2003."¹¹ Classis gave this response even though First CRC had chosen to give no response to either the first or the third of the January 2003 urgings of classis and had carefully avoided using the word rescind in its response to the second urging. Classis did, however, add that it accepted the response of First CRC in this way "with the provision that Toronto I presents its study no later than September 2004."

In the fall of 2003, the situation was somewhat improved. In response to an overture Classis Toronto adopted the following:

That Classis rescind that part of its June 25, '03 decision re the First CRC of Toronto which states that Classis "'accepts First CRC's response as meeting the urgings of Classis Toronto in January 2003.'" That Classis, retaining the provision of June 25, state instead 'that the First CRC has taken an appreciated step in the direction of Classis' urgings.'"¹²

On April 19, 2004, the council of First CRC decided to withdraw the open letter by which its decisions in 2002 had been communicated to the classis. The council stated: "Based on the reactions we have received in the classis and, in particular, the resulting overtures, communications, and appeals to Synod 2004, the congregation feels that the position which it adopted at that time

⁸Both overtures were attached to the Minutes of Classis Toronto, May 22, 2003.

⁹Article 15, Minutes of Classis Toronto, May 22, 2003.

¹⁰Letter from Council of First CRC to Classis Toronto, June 25, 2003.

¹¹Article 3, C, Minutes of Classis, June 25, 2003.

¹²Article 14, Minutes of Classis Toronto, September 2003.

requires further reflection and discussion in the congregation before being published." The council indicated that it was in the "final stages" of preparing the biblical exegesis paper that has been requested by classis but also opined that the congregation had become "fearful that further discussion at classis or synod will not be upbuilding or edifying for the denomination." "In conclusion," it continued, "we request Classis to decide whether it still wishes to receive our paper in September 2004."¹³

By motion from the floor at its May 23, 2003, meeting, classis was asked to indicate that it still wanted to receive the study paper from Toronto First by September 2004. That motion was defeated. As a result, Classis Toronto gave no answer to First Toronto's request for advice on whether or not to still present its paper by September 2004.

In September 2004, Classis Toronto defeated an overture "that Classis Toronto direct the Council of First CRC to complete its position paper on same-sex relationships for submission with the Agenda for the January 2005 meeting of Classis."¹⁴

In January 2005, Classis Toronto received the report of church visitors to First CRC. The classis had sent them in response to an instruction from synod that "Classis Toronto investigate the allegations made . . . regarding persons living in same-sex committed relationships and instruct Classis Toronto to urge First CRC to act in accordance with the guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 632). The church visitors indicated at classis that they felt uncomfortable with this investigative role and instead made it a more general visit in which they included the questions: What has it been like dealing with classis over the past few years? and How do you want to respond to classis? Answers to these questions indicated unhappiness within First CRC that they might be labeled a "gay church." It also indicated a desire that the denomination agree to disagree on the issue of homosexuality. Others shared the belief that First Toronto had already made many compromises in withdrawing their open letter and committing "not to install practicing homosexuals as office bearers."¹⁵

Classis gave no official response to this report. An advisory committee recommended that classis "recognize its continued responsibility in this matter," and "that Classis Toronto instruct Toronto 1st CRC to present its intended study and position paper on this matter by the September 2005 Classis meeting." These recommendations were defeated.¹⁶

III. Conclusions

Maranatha CRC is grateful for the ministry guidelines of our denomination. We believe they describe Christ-centered wisdom for the whole body of Christ in dealing with these matters. The support that is encouraged for those who experience same-sex temptation, for their families, and for those who may

¹³Letter from First CRC dated April 19, 2004, addressed to the May 20, 2004 meeting of classis.

¹⁴Article 20, Minutes of Classis Toronto, September 2004.

¹⁵Church Visitor's Report distributed with minutes of Classis Toronto for January 2004.

¹⁶Article 28, Minutes of Classis Toronto, January 27, 2004.

have also yielded to these temptations is faithful to Scripture and in tune with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In light of what is reported above, there is strong evidence that the approach to pastoral care at First CRC may diverge significantly from the teaching of Scripture and the ministry guidelines of our denomination. Certainly, there is enough information to justify a call for the officebearers to give an account of their approach to ministry.

We are concerned that ministry at First CRC may affirm continued behavior that is condemned by God's Word. If these allegations are true, it would mean that persons who have the right to redemptive ministry are instead given ministry that compromises the gospel and jeopardizes their very salvation. In light of this, Classis Toronto's reluctance to call the officebearers at First CRC to account for their approach to pastoral care may constitute a betrayal of our responsibility for one another in the body of Christ.

IV. Suggestions

Maranatha CRC of Woodbridge, Ontario, suggests the following:

A. That synod require the pastor of First CRC and as many other officebearers as possible to come to synod to give account of their spiritual leadership to the advisory committee asked to take up this communication. They should be asked whether the approach to pastoral care at First CRC involves calling persons in homosexual relationships to leave this sin, or whether it is true that pastoral care in First CRC endorses committed relationships for same-sex couples.

B. That the advisory committee report its findings and recommend whether synod should declare that this congregation by its actions has de facto left the fellowship of the denomination and disaffiliated itself from the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Council of Maranatha CRC
Woodbridge, Ontario
Ron Rupke, clerk

Communication 5: Council of Springdale CRC, Bradford, Ontario

The council of Springdale CRC, Bradford, Ontario, protests the course of action that Classis Toronto has taken in relation to First CRC, Toronto, concerning the validity of committed same-sex relationships. In particular, we are concerned that the actions taken at the January 20, 2005, classis meeting will result in no action being taken that is in harmony with Scripture's teaching on homosexuality and the synodical reports of 1973 and 2002 on homosexuality. This failure of Classis Toronto to take appropriate action is a serious matter and of concern to the denomination as a whole.

I. Background

The interaction between Classis Toronto and First CRC was initiated when the council of First CRC circulated an Open Pastoral Letter to Our Brothers and Sisters in Classis Toronto, October 10, 2002, seeking to provide a context for the seven recommendations attached to the letter that council presented to

the congregation. These recommendations were adopted at a congregational meeting on September 29, 2002, and the congregational vote was confirmed by the council of First CRC on October 7, 2002. The following three recommendations were part of the seven recommendations that were adopted:

1. Because of our love for our brothers and sisters, we adopt the following statement of faith and action: We believe that all people are created in the image of God and are unconditionally loved by God. We the people at First CRC of Toronto are committed to embrace people of all ages, races, genders, sexual orientation, differing abilities, ethnic origins, and economic circumstances. We affirm that all who seek to live faithfully, that is confessing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, are full participants in the life, membership, sacraments and leadership of this congregation. Our desire is to build community in the midst of differences. We agree to honour the views and interpretations which differ from our individual and denominational views and strive to honour God's greatest commandment, to love one another as Christ loves us.
2. We will support with sensitive pastoral care the implications of the adoption of the above statement of faith and action for all the members of our church and their committed relationships.
3. First CRC will consider nominations of gay and lesbian members, including those living in committed relationships, for all elected offices. Out of respect for the denomination's position, we will defer sending elected gay or lesbian council members to Classis in the immediate future.

This led to a series of interactions between Classis Toronto and First CRC. The matter came before Synod 2004 by way of an appeal from the council of Springdale CRC and two overtures from outside Classis Toronto. Synod did not sustain the Springdale appeal, but in response to Overtures 17 and 18, synod adopted the following:

That synod instruct Classis Toronto to investigate the allegations made in the appeal and the overtures regarding persons living in same-sex committed relationships and instruct Classis Toronto to urge First CRC to act in accordance with guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 632)

Classis Toronto's Interim Committee appointed church visitors who, after meeting with the council of First CRC, forwarded their report to classis. The report was circulated with the agenda for the January 20, 2005, classis meeting, and the sections of the report dealing with synod's instruction read as follows:

What has it been like dealing with Classis over the past years?

The council expressed how they have been hurt by the strong condemning language of much of the communication they have received from Classis and Synod. The council feels like the communications have not been respectful. Others expressed that they find the stigmas of being labeled a "gay church" hurtful.

Several on council reflected that they felt the 1973 Synod report is outdated and hurtful and want to see changes made. One example given is that homosexuality is no longer considered a mental disease by the psychiatric profession but is still called a disease in the 1973 report. That aspect of the 1973 report was also accepted as a basis for the 2002 report.

One person reflected that there are some issues we can disagree on as denomination. For example many in the CRC disagree on an issue like "what is a just war"? In the CRC, people have diverging answers to that question and both sides use scripture to support their conclusions. As a denomination we agree to disagree. Why can that not be the case with this issue?

How do you want to respond to Classis?

The council expressed their longing to stay and be a part of the CRC. Someone stated “we have a long history with the CRC and want to remain part of it.”

Several members reflected that they have already made many compromises, withdrawn their open letter and made a commitment not to install practicing homosexuals as office bearers.

While abiding by the requests of classis, they long for the freedom to continue to explore how they can truly embrace everyone who comes into their midst. Council believes that if they hear a confession of faith, “if a person loves Jesus,” then they ought to encourage them to grow in their faith and serve in their area of giftedness. They want the freedom to continue exploring this belief from a biblical perspective.

The council shared that they are committed to a biblical discussion of the issue of homosexuality and the creation of a position paper. The paper is in its third draft. The council has made the commitment that they will not hand this paper out until it has been approved by the whole congregation.

The council shared that they continue to wrestle with how to be ‘church’ in the context God has given them. They long to create room for discussion about this issue and ask that Classis create more time for open discussions.

The council, on behalf of the church, would like to invite visitors from Classis and neighboring churches to come and worship together with them and get to know them.

The council longs to be embraced by Classis and hopes that we can begin to have a constructive conversation

At the January 20, 2005, meeting of Classis Toronto, the committee of pre-advice appointed by the interim committee to deal with the church visitors report presented the following recommendations:

- i. That Classis recognize its continued responsibility in this matter as is appropriate according to Article 42 of the church order.
- ii. That the church visitor’s report, though carefully and sensitively written, does not provide conclusive information on the perspective of ministry presently used by Toronto 1st CRC in ministering to those in committed same sex relationships.
- iii. That Classis Toronto instruct Toronto 1st CRC to present its intended study and position paper on this matter by the September 2005 Classis meeting, clarifying its present perspective on ministering to those in committed same sex relationships so that Classis may respond accordingly and determine whether this perspective meets the guidelines expressed in the Synodical reports of 1973 and 2002.

The recommendations of the committee of pre-advice were defeated.

Next came the following motion:

- i. That Classis Toronto appoint church visitors to investigate the allegations regarding persons living in same- sex committed relationships as directed by Synod 2004.
- ii. That these church visitors report their findings to a special meeting of Classis no later than the end of February 2005.

Classis voted on the first part of the motion, which was defeated. Three negative votes were recorded.

No further decision was made concerning First CRC.

II. Assessment

- A.* This matter has gone on for more than two years, yet no substantial action has been taken to address the heart of the matter—a church ministry that accepts the validity of committed same-sex relationships.
- B.* At present, Classis Toronto gives no indication of planning any concrete action in harmony with Scripture and the synodical reports of 1973 and 2002.
- C.* The report of the church visitors does not fulfill the instruction of Synod 2004.
- D.* The response of classis to the report of the church visitors indicates that classis is not taking synod's instruction seriously.
- E.* The passage of time makes it harder to take constructive, biblical action.
- F.* In the light of Scripture's teaching on homosexuality as well as the synodical reports on homosexuality, this is a serious situation that calls for synod to act directly.

III. Request

The Council of Springdale CRC asks synod to give careful consideration to this matter. We request that synod take direct action as follows:

- A.* Appoint a committee to discern the situation at First CRC, Toronto, concerning the validity of same-sex relationships.
- B.* If it is determined that according to the teaching of Scripture on homosexuality and the synodical reports of 1973 and 2002 concerning homosexuality that there are grounds for disciplining any of the officebearers of First CRC, Toronto, that synod initiate the application of special discipline to those officebearers.

Council of Springdale CRC, Bradford, Ontario
Albert Kooy, clerk

Notes:

Notes:

