

transforming lives and communities worldwide

# AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2008



CHRISTIAN  
REFORMED  
CHURCH

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REFORMED  
CHURCH

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June 14-21, 2008  
Fine Arts Center Auditorium  
Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Synod 2008 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 14, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Auditorium at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. River Walk Community CRC, Battle Creek, Michigan, will serve as the convening church. The pastor of the convening church, Reverend Richard H. Verkaik, will serve as the president pro-tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. Rev. Verkaik will also deliver the message at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise that will be held Sunday, June 15, 2008, at 3:00 p.m. in the Calvin College Chapel on the campus of Calvin College.

There will be an orientation meeting for first-time delegates and advisers Friday evening, June 13, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. While this meeting is intended for first time delegates and advisors, other delegates are welcome to attend. The location of the orientation meeting will be announced at the registration desk.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 8 and 15. 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.

Gerard L. Dykstra  
Executive Director of the CRCNA

## I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2008. Whether you are a returning delegate or whether you are coming for the first time, we sincerely hope and pray that you will find synod to be a pleasant and blessed experience. You come together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the CRC, and as representatives of the classes that delegated and appointed you to serve. Synod is more than just a gathering of church leaders or a governing body. It is a reflection of the church and a time for reflection and celebration of what God is doing in and through the Christian Reformed Church in North America. God has richly blessed us and you have been given a unique privilege to serve him and his Kingdom by your work and synod.

The synodical services staff, under the leadership of Ms. Dee Recker, is available to assist you in whatever way they are able. Please feel free to ask for anything you need, and if you need information before arriving, you may contact the synodical services office by writing [reckerd@crcna.org](mailto:reckerd@crcna.org) or calling 616-224-0832.

## II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2008 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 recorded. 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 executive director 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**

Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule is tentatively in place for Synod 2008:

*Friday orientation*

7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Orientation for first-time delegates and advisers

8:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Orientation for advisers only

*Opening Saturday*

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

*Sunday*

3:00 p.m.

Synodical worship service

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

*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

5:00 - 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.  
8:45 - 11:45 a.m.

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

# DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2008

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Alberta North</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Bruce E. Gritter Raymond A. Blacketer	Ministers . . . . Daniel Meinema Fred M. Bultman
Elders . . . . .	John Stadt Bertus H. Kamphuis	Elders . . . . . <u>Cliff Tuininga</u>
<b>Alberta South/Saskatchewan</b>		
Ministers . . . .	S. George Koopmans J. Greg Sinclair	Ministers . . . . Michelle R. Gritter Curtis D. Korver
Elders . . . . .	Darryl Darwent Chuck Van Dyk	Elders . . . . . Fred Bosma Bert Adema
<b>Arizona</b>		
Ministers . . . .	John J. Berends Kenneth J. Vanderploeg	Ministers . . . . Randall C. Raak Derek Van Dalen
Elders . . . . .	Rodney Hugen Alfred Lindemulder	Elders . . . . . <u>Kenneth L. Rindels</u>
<b>Atlantic Northeast</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Stanley J. Sturing Christopher P. Mitchell	Ministers . . . . Alvern Gelder Christopher Fluit
Elders . . . . .	Tobias Lewis Anton E. Brown	Elders . . . . . Coenraad Bakker Stanley J. Vander Klay
<b>B.C. North-West</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Ezra S. Cheung Ng Pieter G. Sinia	Ministers . . . . Trevor G. Vanderveen Harvey J. Roosma
Elders . . . . .	Elaine S. Yu William W. Wikkerink	Elders . . . . . <u>Steven U.J. Diertens</u>
<b>B.C. South-East</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Sidney Couperus Andrew G. Vander Leek	Ministers . . . . Henry Jonker Colin Vander Ploeg
Elders . . . . .	Jean Dykshoorn Patricia Storteboom	Elders . . . . . John Bandstra Norm Brouwer
<b>California South</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Ronald I. Chu Mark D. Vermaire	Ministers . . . . Jae Hee Kim Rick Kim
Elders . . . . .	Steven Wunderink Jose F. Munoz	Elders . . . . . Mark A. Vander Werf Bill Stout
<b>Central California</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Paul H. Vander Klay Andrew C.S. Narm	Ministers . . . . <u>George G. Vink</u>
Elders . . . . .	Sue Kuipers Henry E. Brower	Elders . . . . . <u>Bryan A. Kamper</u>

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Chatham</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Ralph S. Wigboldus Richard T. Vander Vaart	Ministers . . . . William T. Koopmans Pieter Pereboom
Elders . . . . .	Clarence Zantingh Heiko Oegema	Elders . . . . . Jack Westerhof Martin P.J. Bosveld
<b>Chicago South</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Phillip S. Leo Peter C. Kelder	Ministers . . . . Gerry G. Van Dam Mark D. Timmer
Elders . . . . .	Edward D. Rockett, Jr. Elsa Fennema	Elders . . . . . Raymond A. Leerar
<b>Columbia</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Robert J. Toornstra William S. Wilton	Ministers . . . . D. Vance Hays Roger D. Kramer
Elders . . . . .	Leroy A. Werkhoven John C. Lautenbach	Elders . . . . . Jack Jansons
<b>Eastern Canada</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Kenneth M. Gehrels Daniel G. Brown	Ministers . . . . Michael F. Miedema Pieter A. Heerema
Elders . . . . .	Sarah H. Cook Harmen Boersma	Elders . . . . . Bernard H. Berghout Joyce Bosman
<b>Georgetown</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Terry Scholten Joel R. Boot	Ministers . . . . Terry Genzink Stephen M. Hasper
Elders . . . . .	Philip W. Timmer Donald J. Veltman	Elders . . . . . _____
<b>Grand Rapids East</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Thea N. Leunk Lynn A. Likkell	Ministers . . . . Carl L. Kammeraad William Vanden Bosch
Elders . . . . .	Victoria Gibbs Carol T. Rottman	Elders . . . . . Alan J. DeVries Marilyn Smidt
<b>Grand Rapids North</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Neil P. Jasperse Lucas Rodenhouse	Ministers . . . . Ronald G. Baker Mwaya Wa Kitavi
Elders . . . . .	Larry M. Maat Wayne Hubers	Elders . . . . . Ronald Sprik
<b>Grand Rapids South</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Ronald G. Kool Reginald Smith	Ministers . . . . John J. Steigenga Robert L. Boersma
Elders . . . . .	Dan Buist Robert Noordeloos	Elders . . . . . Dennis P. Dykstra
<b>Grandville</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Calvin D. Compagner Steven C. Elzinga	Ministers . . . . G. Duane Nieuwsma Kent Rottman
Elders . . . . .	Arnold Morren David L. Spoelma	Elders . . . . . Theodore J. Lyzenga Paul Wassink
<b>Greater Los Angeles</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Daniel J. Brink Elmer Tandayu	Ministers . . . . Erick D. Westra Gary M. Stevens
Elders . . . . .	Bill Postma Fatu Auau	Elders . . . . . Mattie Young Mirtha Villafane

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Hackensack</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Sheila Holmes Marco Avila	Ministers . . . . Hernan Zapata-Thomack Joel E. Kok
Elders . . . . .	Leticia Vasquez Karen J. Walker	Elders . . . . . Glen Palmer Stan Tyvoll
<b>Hamilton</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Kenneth F. Benjamins James E. Pot	Ministers . . . . Paul Vanden Brink Andrew Zantingh
Elders . . . . .	Fred Reitsma John W.J. Glasbergen	Elders . . . . . Abraham Bertus Hofland Vicky Dykstra
<b>Heartland</b>		
Ministers . . . .	David L. Heilman Norlyn J. Van Beek	Ministers . . . . Timothy J. Ouwinga Paul A. Hansen
Elders . . . . .	John Kooiker Mark Volkers	Elders . . . . . Rick Vanderberg James C. De Young
<b>Holland</b>		
Ministers . . . .	David L. Van Der Wiele Chad M. Steenwyk	Ministers . . . . Mark Vande Zande Vern D. Swieringa
Elders . . . . .	Earl J. Bouwman Calvin J. Hoogstra	Elders . . . . . Philip Persenaire
<b>Hudson</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Howard J. Vugteveen Craig E. Broek	Ministers . . . . Kook Sung Kim Joseph Changguk Byun
Elders . . . . .	David Dykhouse Howard Jost	Elders . . . . . Richard Kuipers Roy G. Heerema
<b>Huron</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Jack M. Van de Hoef Vicki Verhulst Cok	Ministers . . . . Paul D. Stadt
Elders . . . . .	Robert Damsma John Van Dorp	Elders . . . . . John Ridder Clarence Damsma
<b>Iakota</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Bruce Leiter Mark Verbruggen	Ministers . . . . Eric B. Verhulst Calvin Hoogendoorn
Elders . . . . .	David Schelhaas Duane E. De Berg	Elders . . . . . John Wesselius
<b>Illiana</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Henry Reyenga, Jr. Laryn G. Zoerhof	Ministers . . . . Herman J. Schutt Richard T. Vanderwal
Elders . . . . .	James C. Clousing Arie Swets	Elders . . . . . James Severa
<b>Kalamazoo</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Philip D. Kok Daniel S. Sarkipato	Ministers . . . . Loren J. Kotman Mark A. Minegar
Elders . . . . .	Dan De Vries Glenn Dyksen	Elders . . . . . George Vander Wey
<b>Lake Erie</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Kenneth M. Vander Horst Robert A. Arbogast	Ministers . . . . Nathan Gritter Christopher B. Lanham
Elders . . . . .	Jane Vander Haagen Theo Verbeek	Elders . . . . . Bruce Holleboom

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Lake Superior</b>		
Ministers . . . .	David J. Swinney Jeffrey C. Vanderhooft	Ministers . . . . Daniel J. Vos William Versluys II
Elders . . . . .	Rodger Faber Jim Lipscomb	Elders . . . . . Gordon Bos Wilson Brouwer
<b>Minnkota</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Bradley A. Meinders Joseph Vanden Akker	Ministers . . . . Mark T. Klompjen Gerrit Besteman
Elders . . . . .	Henry Van Dyke Wendale Vander Broek	Elders . . . . . _____ _____
<b>Muskegon</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Michael Borgert Michael D. Koetje	Ministers . . . . Bruce T. Ballast John Rop, Jr.
Elders . . . . .	Kari L. Bonnema Gail Hall	Elders . . . . . Kristen Grek Larry Depender
<b>Niagara</b>		
Ministers . . . .	James C. Dekker Gregory A. Fluit	Ministers . . . . Andrew E. Beunk Rudy W. Ouwehand
Elders . . . . .	Melvin Elzinga Sylvan E. Gerritsma	Elders . . . . . John Bezuyen George De Roo
<b>Northcentral Iowa</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Steven L. Schulz Joel De Boer	Ministers . . . . Gary Brouwers Charles Walton
Elders . . . . .	Wayne Graves Herbert W. Schreur	Elders . . . . . _____ _____
<b>Northern Illinois</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Leonard H. Meinema David R. Armstrong	Ministers . . . . David J. Weemhoff Timothy H. Douma
Elders . . . . .	Frank E. De Boer Kristen Van Engen	Elders . . . . . _____ _____
<b>Northern Michigan</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Steven J. Datema Robert D. Steen	Ministers . . . . Peter R. Byma Jaclyn D. Guikema Busch
Elders . . . . .	Richard A. Huibregste Tom Glass	Elders . . . . . Chris Kostelansky Chet J. Van Haitsma
<b>Pacific Hanmi</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Byung Duk Min Theodore Lim	Ministers . . . . Jang Ho Park _____
Elders . . . . .	Jong Seon Han Peter NakYoung Yoo	Elders . . . . . Paul Im _____
<b>Pacific Northwest</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Timothy B. Toeset Eleanor M. Rietkerk	Ministers . . . . Elizabeth Turnbull Richard J. De Ruiter
Elders . . . . .	Jack Byeman Don L. Korthuis	Elders . . . . . Peter J. Mans _____
<b>Pella</b>		
Ministers . . . .	Thomas E. Pettinga Gilbert J. Kampos	Ministers . . . . Arthur J. Van Wolde Donald Draayer
Elders . . . . .	Ron W. Zwiers Ron Groenendyk	Elders . . . . . Lee Talma Donald S. Shippy

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Quinte</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	B. Bernard Bakker Ed W. Visser	Ministers . . . . . Ronald J. Smeding Nathan Kuperus
Elders . . . . .	Mary Hosmar John Mulder	Elders . . . . . Marten Van Harmelen Harry Hiemstra
<b>Red Mesa</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	William J. Kempkes Raymond Slim	Ministers . . . . . John W. Dykhuis W. Keith Bulthuis
Elders . . . . .	Lavern Van Klompenberg Duane Chimoni	Elders . . . . . Randy Freeland N. Theresa Rottschaffer
<b>Rocky Mountain</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Robert L. Westenbroek B. Joy Engelsman	Ministers . . . . . Mark A. Quist Thomas E. Dykman
Elders . . . . .	LaVerne Jordan Russell Groenendyk	Elders . . . . . Terry M. Gray Robert W. Bandstra
<b>Southeast U.S.</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Thomas R. Dykstra Robert R. Broekema	Ministers . . . . . Scott Vander Ploeg Stanley J. Workman
Elders . . . . .	Donald J. Bouwer James L. Kelley, Jr.	Elders . . . . . _____ _____
<b>Thornapple Valley</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Brian L. Ochsner Merlin N. Buwalda	Ministers . . . . . David D. Poolman Thomas J. De Vries
Elders . . . . .	Ray J. Prins Phyllis J. Moes	Elders . . . . . Ken D. Oosterhouse _____
<b>Toronto</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Joan De Vries Kenneth R. Rip	Ministers . . . . . Jacob (Jack) Kerkhof Henry Wildeboer
Elders . . . . .	Nell DeBoer Pascal Mpalirwa	Elders . . . . . John Kassies Jan De Koning
<b>Wisconsin</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Robert A. Sizemore Leslie J. Kuiper	Ministers . . . . . Jeffrey J. Brower Michael Winnowski
Elders . . . . .	Alvin J. Venhuizen Henry Perez	Elders . . . . . Kevin Gesch _____
<b>Yellowstone</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Thomas Vander Ziel Randall Van Osdol	Ministers . . . . . _____ _____
Elders . . . . .	Michael D. Cok Fred Kessler	Elders . . . . . _____ _____
<b>Zeeland</b>		
Ministers . . . . .	Timothy Howerzyl John G. Aukema	Ministers . . . . . Ronald D. De Young Aaron J. Vriesman
Elders . . . . .	Calvin Scholma Preston Heyboer	Elders . . . . . David Holm Harvey Koetje

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES



# BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board or BOT) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 2007 and Synod 2008.

## I. Introduction

### A. *General*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, entrusted the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to his disciples and commanded them to be his witnesses, teaching all nations to obey everything he had commanded.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the church corporately and each of its members individually, led by the Holy Spirit, are called to share this gospel of the kingdom within the fellowship of the church and with people throughout the world by proclaiming God's Word and giving God the worship and honor that are his due, in the confidence that Christ is building up the church and is establishing the kingdom.

To carry out this mission, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter synod) has created the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and such agencies, committees, and institutions as are listed in its bylaws. These agencies, committees, and institutions function primarily within Canada and the United States, where the Christian Reformed Church is committed to being a binational denomination. Each organizational entity and each national expression of the Christian Reformed Church in North America makes its own unique contribution to God's mission in the world as the whole denomination strives to live the fullness of the gospel.

(Preamble, Constitution of the Board of Trustees)

The Board, a synodically elected and appointed governing body, whose members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation, has met two times since Synod 2007 (September 2007 and February 2008) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2008. The Board's agenda normally consists of agency matters (program review, personnel appointments, focus of the agency, and so forth), polity matters (study reports, board appointments, interim committee of synod concerns), as well as normal organizational matters that come up in a complex organization such as the CRCNA. In addition, the Board oversees the work of the executive director.

Nearly all the matters addressed by the Board impact the full CRCNA as a bi-national church, but, in compliance with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities, the Canadian trustees review and approve all actions taken by the full Board and, as necessary, address any matters that

relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. The Board, as synod’s agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the entire church.

*B. Membership*

The members of the Board from the United States are Mr. James Clousing (member-at-large), Mr. Dan Cooke (Region 12), Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga (Region 9), Ms. Sari Mills (member-at-large), Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (Region 11), Rev. Eleanor M. Rietkerk (member-at-large), Rev. John Rop, Jr. (Region 10), Mrs. N. Theresa Rottschäfer (Region 7), Mrs. JoAnn Lieffers Swart (Region 11), Rev. Rodney Vander Ley (Region 5), Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven (Region 8), Ms. Suzanne Van Engen (Region 10), Mr. Marion D. Van Soelen (Region 8), Rev. Mark Vermaire (Region 6), and Mrs. Beverly A. Weeks (Region 11).

The members of the Board from Canada are Rev. Andrew Beunk (Niagara), Mr. William Crofton (B.C. North-West), Mr. Jack Geschiere (Chatham), Rev. John R. Huizinga (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Rev. Jake Kuipers (Quinte), Mr. Marten Mol (Toronto), Ms. Gayle Monsma (member-at-large), Mr. Keith Oosthoek (member-at-large), Rev. John Pasma (Alberta North), Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra (B.C. South-East), Rev. William C. Tuininga (Lake Superior), Mrs. Patricia Storteboom (member-at-large), Mr. Gary VanArragon (Huron), Rev. Paul Vanderkooy (Eastern Canada), and Rev. Arie G. Van Eek (Hamilton).

The executive director (Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

1. Board officers: Mr. K. Oosthoek, president; Rev. M. Vermaire, vice president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Mrs. P. Storteboom, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers:  
Canadian Corporation: Mr. K. Oosthoek, president; Rev. J. Kuipers, vice president; Mrs. P. Storteboom, secretary.  
  
Michigan Corporation: Rev. M. Vermaire, president; Mr. D. Cooke, vice president, Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Mrs. B.A. Weeks, vice-all.
3. Executive Committee: Mr. D. Cooke; Rev. J. Kuipers; Mr. K. Oosthoek, chair; Mrs. P. Storteboom; Mrs. B.A. Weeks; and Rev. M. Vermaire. Rev. G.L. Dykstra serves ex officio.

*C. Salary disclosure*

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	1	2nd
19	2	2nd and 3rd
18	2	2nd
17	1	2nd

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  
2007-2008 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	Minimum	U.S. Range		Canadian Range		
		Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$106,263	\$132,829	\$159,395			
19	\$95,794	\$119,742	\$143,691			
18	\$85,381	\$106,726	\$128,071	\$96,931	\$121,164	\$145,397
17	\$76,631	\$95,788	\$114,946	\$84,221	\$105,276	\$126,331
16	\$69,292	\$86,615	\$103,938	\$73,702	\$92,128	\$110,553
15	\$63,107	\$78,883	\$94,660	\$64,922	\$81,152	\$97,383
14	\$55,393	\$69,242	\$83,090	\$57,529	\$71,912	\$86,294
13	\$48,925	\$61,157	\$73,388	\$51,340	\$64,175	\$77,010

## 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	Grand Rapids South	Rev. David A. Struyk	Rev. Robert L. Boersma	2010(1)
	Grandville	Rev. John P. Douma	Rev. Douglas A. Kamstra	2010(1)
	Hamilton	Rev. Henry Katerberg		2010(1)
	Kalamazoo	Rev. Kenneth A. Baker	Rev. Richard H. Verkaik	2011(1)
	Northcentral Iowa		Rev. Thomas J. Niehof	
	Pacific Northwest	Rev. Thomas J. Kok	Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman	2010(1)
	Pella		Rev. Dale W. Visser	
	Rocky Mountain	Rev. Merwin Rylaarsdam	Rev. Thomas D. Draayer	2010(1)
	Southeast U.S.		Rev. Scott Vanderploeg	
	Wisconsin		Rev. Michael Winnowski	
CRWRC	Hackensack	Ms. Sonia Estrella		2010(1)
	Quinte	Mr. Andy Hiemstra		2010(1)
	Southeast U.S.	Mr. Don Bouwer		2010(1)

#### 2. Classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 2007, the executive director keeps a list of those classes that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis. 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 that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis:

Heartland	Northcentral Iowa
Iakota	Wisconsin
Minnkota	Yellowstone

#### 3. Ethnic advisers to synod

Synod 2005 revised the rules governing the appointment of ethnic advisers. The basic policy follows:

At each synod, up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod. The position of ethnic adviser is continued "as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which it shall be discontinued. The BOT should appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed."

The number of ethnic minority delegates appointed by classes to be at Synod 2008 at this writing is twenty-one. To round out that number to reach twenty-five, the BOT appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to synod (\* indicates service in 2007):

\*Ms. Irene C. Bakker  
\*Mrs. Helen Brent  
Ms. Shashi DeHaan  
Ms. Ladan Jennings  
\*Rev. Jonathan J. Kim  
Ms. Anne Agosto Severa  
Mr. Hernan Zapata-Thomack

#### 4. Women advisers to synod

- a. Synod 2001 adopted a set of guidelines to regulate this advisory position (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 493). On the basis of the guidelines, the Board appointed the following women advisers for Synod 2008 (\* indicates service in 2007):

\*Ms. Marilyn J. Baker  
Ms. Henny Drost  
Ms. Maureen Geerlings  
Ms. Margaret Hummelmán  
Ms. Marta Palmer  
\*Ms. Katherine A. Vander Grift

- b. Given the decision of Synod 2007 to allow for the representation of women as delegates to synod, the Board of Trustees recommends the following:

That beginning with Synod 2009, woman advisers no longer be appointed to serve synod.

*Grounds:*

- 1) Synod 2007 approved the appointment of women delegates to synod.
- 2) The number of women delegates now exceeds the number of women appointed to serve synod as advisers.

#### 5. 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. Nominations are then prepared by the Board and are forwarded to

synod for election. Generally, 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 Lake Superior–Canadian congregations *only* are presenting a single nominee):

#### *Region 7*

*Rev. John W. Dykhuis* is the pastor of Fellowship CRC in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He received his M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary. Rev. Dykhuis has served as a synodical deputy and a stated clerk. He currently acts as the president of the church council.

*Rev. John Terpstra* is the senior pastor of Immanuel CRC in Fort Collins, Colorado. After receiving a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Calvin College, he went on to complete the master of divinity program at Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Terpstra has served the denomination on the Board of Publications and has been involved with several clergy mentoring groups through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program. He has served classis as chair of the interim committee. Rev. Terpstra has also been a member of the Classical Renewal Team and the Safe Church Team, as well as a church visitor. Rev. Terpstra has served as chair of his church council, and served on the advisory board of the Department of Social Services in Boulder, Colorado.

#### *Region 8*

*Mr. Duane Bonnema*, a member of First CRC in Prinsburg, Minnesota, is the owner and operator of Bonnema Surveys, Inc. His compassion and dedication to serving the Lord is evidenced in his participation with disaster relief, leading four work crews to aid in the Hurricane Katrina relief effort as well as with flood cleanup in Minnesota. He has served his church as a deacon, elder, and Sunday school and catechism teacher. Mr. Bonnema has served the denomination on the board of the Back to God Hour as well as on the boards of Elim Christian School, New Life Treatment Center, and Central Minnesota Christian School.

*Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen*, a member of Calvary CRC in Orange City, Iowa, is a senior attorney at Klay Law Firm in Alton, Iowa. He has served as a deacon, elder, and president of council and has served as a foster parent. Mr. Veldhuizen has served on the boards of Calvin Theological Seminary, the Barnabas Foundation, Bethany Christian Services, and Bethesda Hospital. He has served as a member of the Judicial Code Committee, a delegate to synod, and an advisory committee chair. Currently Mr. Veldhuizen serves as president–elect of the Planned Giving Council of Siouxland and also is a member of the Hope Haven Foundation board and the Calvary Church Vision committee.

### *Region 11*

*Mr. Roy Stallworth*, a member of Oakdale Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, comes from a varied academic background with course work and degrees in accounting, business management, sociology, and educational leadership and administration. Currently, he is a social studies teacher in the public school system. Mr. Stallworth serves as an elder, supervisor of youth ministries, and overseer of a ministry associate in Tijuana, Mexico. Mr. Stallworth has served as an adviser on various boards. He currently serves as a facilitator for the Race Relations Office.

*Ms. Joy Witte*, a member of Ivanrest CRC in Wyoming, Michigan, has served in several venues as a teacher, writer, and editor. She has served CRWRC in fundraising, communications, and learning coordination. While with CRWRC, she also served as an administration team leader, a member of the management group, and a member of the building security committee. Ms. Witte has served her church as a deacon.

### *Region 12*

*Rev. Alvern Gelder* is the pastor of Valley CRC in Binghamton, New York. He has served on the boards of Calvin Theological Seminary and Home Missions, seven years as board secretary and president. Rev. Gelder presently serves on the state of New York Board of Visitors and the Broome Developmental Center. He also serves as stated clerk of classis and as chair of the regional ministerial leadership team.

*Rev. Sheila Holmes* is the pastor of Northside Community CRC in Paterson, New Jersey. She has served the denomination on the Home Missions board where she has been part of the executive committee and has served on the search committee for the Home Missions director. Rev. Holmes served synod as an ethnic adviser and a member of the synodical committee for restorative justice. Currently she is on the synodical committee for revision of the contemporary testimony. Rev. Holmes has been involved on a classical level with the Northeastern classical ministry team, Home Missions, and as a prayer coordinator.

### *Classis Chatham*

*Mr. Calvin Davies* is a Calvin College graduate and has completed course work at Westminster Theological Seminary. He has served various communities as a Christian school teacher, teaching music, English, and history to secondary school students. He co-authored a music curriculum text for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, worked on curriculum development, and served on building committees. Mr. Davies uses his skills to enhance music and worship in the churches where he has been a member. Currently he serves as an elder at the Good News CRC in London, Ontario. Mr. Davies has served as a synodical delegate.

*Mrs. Grace Miedema* has served in pastoral ministry with her husband, Dirk, for twenty-six years. She serves CRC Home Missions through campus ministry at Fanshaw College in London, Ontario. While a chaplain there, she earned a master of theological studies.

Mrs. Miedema has served her local community through various ministries such as Coffee Break, Friendship Ministries, Sunday School, and the Oxford social justice committee. Mrs. Miedema has also served on the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association and the Board of Publications where she had a special interest in race relations. Currently, she is chair of the Committee for Contact with the Government for the CRC (Canada Corporation).

*Classis Quinte*

Mr. Wybe Bylsma, a member of Grace CRC in Cobourg, Ontario, is a retired teacher who has demonstrated a passion for the pastoral care of God's people. After teaching, he and his wife operated several group homes for children who had no home or could not function in their own family. He has reached out to international students from Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East through teaching and counseling services. Currently Mr. Bylsma serves on the Classis Quinte ministry committee and as chairman of the Marriage and Family Life task force. He served on the board of CRWRC and as Redeemer University College governor and chairman of the Classis Quinte elders conference. Mr. Bylsma has also served as an elder and clerk of council.

Mr. John Schievink is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario, where he has served as an elder, youth elder, and as council chair. He is a retired high school teacher who is well organized and has a love for the CRC. Mr. Schievink has served classis as a synodical delegate and has served on the board of governors of Redeemer College. Currently he serves on the Rehoboth CRC search committee and is a pastoral care visitor.

The following single nominee is coming to synod for election of a first term:

*Classis Lake Superior – Canadian congregations only*

Ms. Jeanette Bax is a long-time member of Bethlehem CRC in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She has served on the church council, as a church organist, and as a catechism teacher. Her committee involvement includes work on the worship planning team, music team, and safe church team. Ms. Bax is currently employed as the manager of the Children's Services division for the District of Thunder Bay. She has taught at a local college and is a silent partner in her husband's forestry consulting firm. Ms. Bax has served on several boards, including Our Kid Count, Communities Together for Children, and the Thunder Bay Christian Community Center. She currently serves on committees for Children's Services, Best Start Network, Children's Mental Health Foundation, the Child Care Advisory Committee, and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association.

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

*Huron*

Mr. Gary VanArragon (incumbent)

Mr. Jack Tacoma (alternate)

### *Region 6*

Rev. Mark Vermaire (incumbent)

Rev. Carl Kromminga (alternate)

#### b. At-large members

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also appointed directly by synod. This year Ms. Gayle Monsma is completing her first term and is eligible for a second three-year term. 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 are coming to synod for ratification of a second term:

#### *Canada*

Ms. Gayle Monsma (incumbent)

Mrs. Hilda E. Roukema (alternate)

#### c. Single nominations for Board membership

In recent years it has become more and more difficult to find nominees who are willing to be part of a two-person election process. Often the people asked are highly qualified to serve in many places of ministry and are unwilling to wait months before knowing if they are actually going to be elected. Others find that they are unable to accept other appointments because they have committed to serve, only to find out later that they were not elected. Unfortunately, this has reduced the pool of those willing to stand for election.

The Board of Trustees proposes that synod change the current practice of presenting a slate of nominees for denominational board and committee positions and that only single nominations be required.

#### *Grounds:*

- 1) The culture of volunteerism is changing, with the result that it is increasingly difficult to obtain the concurrence of nominees to be placed in nomination (especially on duos).
- 2) In the appointment of one out of a slate of two nominees, the interest and service of a potentially viable candidate for future service on the BOT (as well as other boards and committees) is substantially reduced.
- 3) The timeline of submitting one's name in November of one year, but not learning the outcome of the vote until the end of June the following year is inconsiderate and reduces the interest of potential appointees to be nominated unless their appointment can be reasonably assured.

#### d. Discontinuance of board alternates

The practice of electing alternate board members has recently come into question. At the present time, the Board of Trustees, Calvin Theological Seminary, CR Home Missions, and Faith Alive have alternate members to the board delegates. Calvin College, Back to God Hour, CR World Missions, and CRWRC boards do not. Given the large number of people who serve on denominational boards



and committees, it may be time to consider discontinuing the use of alternates on the BOT.

- 1) The BOT recommends to synod that the Board of Trustees no longer be required to appoint alternate members.

*Grounds:*

- a) The elimination of alternate positions makes it possible for thirty additional people to serve on other boards and committees without conflict of time or interest.
  - b) Alternates who attend Board meetings only occasionally are often unfamiliar with issues and procedures.
- 2) Subsequently, subject to the approval by synod of the above recommendation, the Board requests that all BOT alternate positions be discontinued following Synod 2008.

#### 6. Faith Alive Christian Resources director appointment

Mr. Gary Mulder has faithfully served as the director of Faith Alive Christian Resources for more than twenty-three years. With his anticipated retirement late in 2008, a search process has begun and the Faith Alive board hopes to present a nomination to the BOT prior to Synod 2009. At the request of the Faith Alive board, the BOT recommends that synod empower the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to ratify, on its behalf, its appointment of the new director of Faith Alive Christian Resources when one has been chosen.

*Grounds:*

- a. It is unlikely that the search committee given the task to fill this position will complete its work in time for synod.
  - b. Because the current incumbent of this position, Mr. Gary Mulder, does not plan to retire until late November 2008, a June 2008 appointment of a replacement would be premature.
- #### 7. Christian Reformed World Missions board appointment
- Shortly after Synod 2007, the recently elected Region 7 delegate to the Christian Reformed World Missions board was unable to fulfill her board appointment. At the request of the World Missions board, the BOT appointed Mr. Chuck Powell (also nominated to Synod 2007) to fill out the term.
- #### 8. Bible Translation Committee Report

In response to the request by Synod 2006 for a Translation Committee to review and make recommendations regarding the New Living Translation (NLT). The committee has completed its report and recommendations regarding the translation. The report can be found in Appendix A. The committee recommends that synod designate, with reservations (as outlined in the report), the New Living Translation (NLT) as one of the versions acceptable for use in CRC worship services.

*Ground:* The NLT generally meets the requirements of the three principles used as criteria for evaluation for designation of versions acceptable for use in CRC worship services, but the church should also be alerted to the limitations illustrated in the committee's report.

9. Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force

Synod 2007 instructed the Board of Trustees to appoint a task force to consider the denomination's communal covenantal commitment, especially as it relates to financially providing for institutions, agencies, ministries, and churches of the CRC, and that the BOT bring any findings and recommendations to Synod 2009. The BOT appointed the task force, and it has begun its work and anticipates completing its work over the next year. Members appointed to the committee are Ms. Ronda Berg, Mr. Lloyd Bierma, Mr. Hessel Keilstra, Mrs. Patricia Storteboom, Mr. Paul Wassink, Rev. Stanley Workman, and Mr. John H. Bolt (ex officio).

10. Dynamic Youth Ministries Partnership Agreement

For more than fifty years, the Christian Reformed Church has had a close unique relationship with Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM). Though it has never been an agency of the CRC, it has functioned as the youth ministry arm of the church. Over the years, that relationship has had an ebb and flow, often impacted by particular leadership in both organizations. In recent years, there has been a desire to strengthen and clarify this critical relationship. As a result the BOT, on behalf of the denomination, has ratified a partnership agreement with DYM that will assist both organizations in engaging youth as followers of Jesus Christ.

11. Leadership Institute Governing Board

The Leadership Institute endorsed by Synod 2006 has begun to take shape. The founding document, approved by the BOT in 2007 and presented to Synod 2007, has provided guidance, and a newly appointed board of directors is working to identify the staff and structure that will make this initiative a reality for the future of the church. Those appointed by the BOT to serve on the Governing Board are Rev. Neil De Koning (at-large), Ms. Karen Helder (at-large), Dr. Syd Hielema (Redeemer University College), Dr. Duane Kelderman (Calvin Theological Seminary), Dr. Douglas Koopman (Calvin College), Rev. Christian Oh (at-large), Dr. Gary Teja (Kuyper College), and Dr. Steve Timmermans, chair (Trinity Christian College).

In addition, the Board authorized the Governing Board to nominate (for BOT appointment) up to six additional members in order to increase diversity. The executive director or his designee was added to the membership as an ex-officio member.

12. Healthy congregations and denominational structure

Synod 2006 requested that the executive director recommend to the BOT the most effective way to structure the denomination's ministries so as to implement the priority of healthy congregations. While many changes have taken place to assure that our agencies and institutions are working toward the priority, the process of reviewing our present structures must be done with great care and broad input from the church and its leaders. With the arrival of a newly appointed director of denominational ministries, this review process is under way in earnest. The executive director intends to present a written report to the September 2008 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

13. Abuse Response Task Force

Synod 2006 instructed the Board of Trustees to appoint a small task force to consider how the denomination ought to be responding, whether in financial terms or otherwise, to the very real consequences of sexual abuse in the lives of current and former members, and requested that the Board of Trustees report its recommendations to Synod 2008. The task force has completed its work and the final recommendations from the Board will be included in the supplemental material following its May 2008 meeting.

14. Project Ploughshares

In response to the Committee to Study War and Peace report presented to Synod 2006, the BOT was urged by synod to participate more intentionally in policy development and programs for peace building, such as Project Ploughshares. In September 2007 the Board endorsed the participation of the CRCNA in Project Ploughshares as a sponsoring church.

15. Adoption of change in Church Order Articles

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)

Synod 2007 (see *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 665) proposed to Synod 2008 that Church Order Article 23-d be revised to provide a pathway into ministry in organized congregations for individuals entering the CRC who do not have a master of divinity degree or do not meet the other standards required for Church Order Article 6, 7, or 8 ordination to minister of the Word. This arrangement helps the denomination address the significant current and anticipated need for pastors to serve in our churches and preserves Articles 6, 7, and 8 as the normal routes to pastoral ministry in the CRC. The new text for Church Order Article 23-d follows:

- d. *Ministry associates may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations have economic need and are from a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical.*

16. Sea to Sea

The Sea to Sea – Ending the Cycle of Poverty is on track with more than 200 riders, seeking to raise more than \$1.5 million dollars for poverty relief around the world. The ride begins in late June 2008 in Seattle, Washington, and will end on Liberty Island in New Jersey. Along the way it will pass through Denver, Chicago, Grand Rapids, and Toronto. Rev. Jake Kuipers, a Board trustee from Classis Quinte, will be

pedaling some 6,000 kilometers (3,750 miles) from coast to coast, as the unofficial representative of the BOT.

17. Convening churches of synod

The Board regularly receives invitations by churches wishing to convene future synods and forwards the invitations to synod for their approval. Synod has previously approved the following convening church:

2009 – Elmhurst CRC in Elmhurst, Illinois, with synod meeting at Trinity Christian College

2010 – First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, with synod meeting at The Kings University College

18. Judicial Code Committee

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 procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee's nine members include people with legal expertise and include both clergy and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

Two members of the Judicial Code Committee are completing their second terms and are not eligible for reelection for another term: Dr. Ralph Smeda and Rev. John J. Steigenga. On behalf of the denomination, 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.

The Board recommends that Synod 2008 appoint the following single nominees for membership to the Judicial Code Committee:

*Rev. Leslie Kuiper* is the senior pastor of First CRC in Oostburg, Wisconsin. He has also served his church as member and chair of council. Rev. Kuiper has served on the boards of Dordt College, Calvin College, and World Missions. He has also served as a regional pastor and on the regional ministry team.

*Mr. James Mutoigo* is serving in Kampala, Uganda, as a sole practitioner where the scope of his work involves commercial law, employment law, corporate law, and commercial and residential real estate law. He has been employed as a law associate and has served as a lecturer and teacher of the law in several venues in Kampala. Mr. Mutoigo holds memberships in many law associations. He has served his community and the church as an advocate for the Evangelical Fellowship of Uganda and the Joint Christian Council on morality issues and has proposed legal amendments. He has been an alternate board member for CRWRC as well as a member of the Jubilee 2000 steering committee. He has served as member, secretary, and treasurer of the CRC Race Relations Advisory Committee. Mr. Mutoigo has served the church as an elder and a deacon.

## 19. Publications and services

### a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the executive director 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.

The *Yearbook* is published each January and reflects 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 2008 *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 1,049 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was at the 84 percent level this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 880 ministries.

### b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was published, incorporating the changes adopted by Synod 2007. In addition, proposed Church Order changes are included in italics for consideration for adoption by Synod 2008. The Church Order is updated by the executive director 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 director of synodical services under the direction of the executive director. 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. *Resources available on the Christian Reformed Church website*

With the greater use of electronic media and a significant decline in requests for printed material, the CRCNA website ([www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org)) has become a valuable tool for congregations and

their staff in accessing denominational resources. The website is regularly updated, and the information and forms provided are the most current available.

e. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual was revised in 2007 by the office of the executive director and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the executive director.

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. Additional information regarding financial matters are contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2008—Financial and Business Supplement* distributed at synod. All requests for offerings and ministry-share allocations will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

The BOT provides oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries is provided for through the office of the executive director (ED) of the CRCNA with the assistance of the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of denominational ministries (DDM), and the office of the director of finance and administration (DFA). The Ministry Council (MC) is the interagency administrative entity that is consulted as needed for the overall administration of the denomination, has responsibility for the Denominational Ministries Plan and the collaboration among the agencies, and recommends to the Board such program matters as require its approval. The membership of the MC is composed of senior denominational staff and is chaired by the ED.

The Board is thankful to report that the cooperation among the agencies and educational institutions is very good and continues to improve. The use of the Ministries Plan Scorecard, has served to focus the different agencies on common objectives. This effort has served the church well and continues to raise the awareness of our responsibilities to serve the churches as well as serving for the churches. In addition, joint ministry initiatives, frequent interagency consultations, and the use of shared resources are common. In an effort to assure that the church's resources are used well, the Board encourages the consolidation of support functions that are common to several or all of the denominational agencies. While challenging at times, the result of these efforts has been gratifying.

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. Specialized Ministries

a. Aboriginal Ministries

This year the media has kept the public well informed about the alarming struggles and complicated issues involving many of Canada's First Nations—complicated land claims and treaty rights, abuse in

residential schools and appropriate compensation, escalating suicide rates, substance abuse, and poverty.

Some things have not been so widely reported, however—the beauty of aboriginal culture and the deep spirituality among many aboriginal people. The Christian Reformed Church is seeking the blessing of First Nations people in the name of the Lord, through the leadership of the denomination's Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee; by means of the ministry centers to urban aboriginal people in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton; and in the context of congregational ministries.

b. Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG)

Among other things, justice work takes passion and enthusiasm. It also takes a good deal of collaboration. Church groups in Canada (denominations, ecumenical groups, and parachurch organizations) have a rich history of working together for justice and peace. The CRC's Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) appreciates this history of collaboration and deliberately builds partnerships into its work—because principled discussion, worship, and prayer with faithful friends enriches our perspectives on faith and justice. Thus, CCG commends the Canadian Council of Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, KAIROS, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and more than a few others! Beyond these institutional connections, CCG is also privileged to learn from and work with young members of the CRC community. Enthusiastic interns and working group members, often in their university years, have been an important part of CCG's recent dialogue on peace with justice. Whether through research, popular writing, or passionate participation in debate, these good people have shaped CCG by their profound Christian commitment to living for shalom. Some of the fruits of this collaboration and community can be found at [www.crcna.org/ccg](http://www.crcna.org/ccg).

c. The Office of Abuse Prevention

The Office of Abuse Prevention, directed by Ms. Beth Swagman, creates safe churches by assisting congregations, church leaders, and classes with educational materials, advice, and support. By raising awareness, promoting justice, and providing the tools to reduce the risk of abuse in the church, this office provides an important service to local churches and the broader CRC. The full report from Abuse Prevention is contained in Appendix B.

d. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries, led by former U.S. Army chaplain Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., supports and assists Christian Reformed chaplains. While normally employed by nondenominational organizations, these chaplains represent the CRC in many and varied settings. Chaplains most often encounter people at their point of greatest need and vulnerability. Often these encounters and the work of the chaplains take place in a secular or multifaith setting, making their tasks even more challenging and complex. These men and women are the heart



and hands of the church in often difficult and complex situations. A full report from Chaplaincy Ministries is contained in Appendix C.

e. The Office of Disability Concerns

The staff of and volunteers for the Office of Disability Concerns seek to help churches become more hospitable, inclusive, and healthy communities that intentionally seek

- to end the isolation and disconnectedness of persons with disabilities and their families,
- to nurture the spiritual lives of people with disabilities so that they become professing and active members of their churches, and
- to encourage the gifts of people with disabilities so that they can serve God fully in their churches.

We summarize this work this way: *Everybody belongs. Everybody serves.* A more detailed report of the work of the Office of Disability Concerns can be found in Appendix D.

f. The Office of Ministry Planning

Rev. 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.

The current plan dates from 2006. It is a plan that focuses on biblical and theological identity and the core values that unite us in ministry.

The plan's core values and their implications are as follows:

1) We value Scripture as interpreted in the Reformed tradition

This means the following:

- We treasure the gospel as God's good news for the world
- Discipleship is at the heart of our life and faith
- Theological clarity and consistency is integral to our ministries
- Our family and church relationships spring from covenants of trust and accountability
- In good times and bad we rest in the sovereignty and providence of God

2) We value a kingdom perspective

This means the following:

- We affirm justice and mercy as attributes of God and requirements for humanity
- We oppose racism and work to counter its effects
- We are stewards of God's resources
- We embrace all people as God's imagebearers

3) We value the church as God's new community

This means the following:

- We affirm the Church's key role in God's mission to redeem the world



- We recognize that our corporate vitality depends on healthy local congregations
- We cultivate leaders and members who are biblically formed, competent, trustworthy, and committed to following Jesus Christ
- We seek leaders who reflect the range of voices and people in the church
- We work collaboratively with others through worldwide networks and partnerships
- We are one in purpose, identity, and ministry
- We are a source of stability for members and partners

4) We value Christian vocation

This means the following:

- We act in ways that place God at the center of our lives, and give him glory
- We find opportunity to serve God in multiple occupations and settings
- We want to do the right things for the right reasons and with maximum impact, doing them effectively, efficiently, and with integrity
- We want children and young people to see that they belong to Christ and to find their place of service within the church and community

The plan's ten strategic objectives are as follows:

- 1) Transform lives and communities
- 2) **Create and sustain healthy congregations**
- 3) Transcend boundaries
- 4) Disciple believers
- 5) Develop leaders
- 6) Nurture children and youth
- 7) Become ministries of choice
- 8) Develop staff capacity
- 9) Ignite generosity
- 10) Partner for impact

It is important to note that the second objective, create and sustain healthy congregations (in bold above), was endorsed by Synod 2005 as the priority for our ministries at the present time. As the plan itself comments, "By focusing on the health of the local congregation, the Board recognizes both need and opportunity. Many congregations are struggling. They need attention—and they need resources. Yet the purpose of this attention—and the fruit of congregational health—is that they see and seize opportunities to be agents of God's transforming mission, locally, nationally, and throughout the world."

In order to effectively implement the plan throughout our ministries, the Board has adopted a tool widely used in business, government, and non-profit organizations, called the Balanced Scorecard. Our own term for it is the Ministries Plan Scorecard (MPS). The MPS gives us the means to ensure that all of our ministry agencies are pulling together in a coordinated, collaborative way to fulfill the plan's ten objectives. This

year, the MPS is operational at the interagency level, and agencies are working to align their own plans and targets with both its content and its format. Consequently, the Board is better able to use the plan as a dynamic instrument for oversight of our ministries.

g. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations

The scope and work of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations, under the direction of Rev. Duane Visser, continues to expand. Churches continue to seek advice and support in building better and more effective relationships. Rev. Norman Thomasma works with Rev. Visser and devotes much of his time to education, with a particular focus on the unique dynamics of staff ministries. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations also provides information services to assist churches in their ministerial search processes. The efforts of this ministry are more fully described in the report that is contained in Appendix E.

h. The Office of Race Relations

Directed by Rev. Esteban Lugo, the ministry of Race Relations is engaged in a plan to bring about biblical reconciliation within the church. This past year, over three hundred people have taken the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) or Widening the Circle (WTC) workshops in the United States and Canada. With the assistance of Mr. Steven Kabetu in Canada and Rev. Norberto Wolf in California, Rev. Lugo and a team of trained facilitators provide avenues for bringing racial reconciliation to the church. The 2007 Multiethnic Conference, with attendance of around ninety participants, took place at Calvin College during synod. The Office of Race Relations is once again planning for All Nations Heritage (ANH) Sunday, October 5, 2008. The office has also recently held the third Women of the Nations Summit to minister to the women with whom we come in contact. The report of the Office of Race Relations is contained in Appendix F.

i. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, under the coordination of Mr. Peter Vander Meulen and staff, work diligently in efforts to bring justice around the world, beginning in North America. These activities 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. A more complete report is contained in Appendix G.

j. ServiceLink

The ministries of the church are manifestations of people's understanding of and commitment to God's calling for us to be salt and light in this world. It is exciting to see numerous people use their God-given gifts by volunteering with the ministries, programs, and offices of the Christian Reformed Church.

ServiceLink within Canada helps in the process of linking participants with various opportunities around the world and to prepare individuals and groups to serve with a high degree of understanding what each opportunity will entail. With the growing interest in long-

and short-term volunteer ministry, it is delightful to enhance the work of our agencies and provide various opportunities to broaden the work of the kingdom.

k. Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE)

The Board of Trustees is pleased this year to announce completion of the inaugural year of a new program, called Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE), funded not by the Lilly Endowment, as the name may suggest, but by synod itself through a \$10 ministry share approved in 2005 and renewed again by Synods 2006 and 2007. The project both supports the denominational priority of healthy local congregations mentioned above and responds to synod's own concern that funds will "assist local churches, directed specifically toward smaller congregations."

The purpose of the program is to promote healthy congregations through grants for renewal and technical support, gatherings for mutual learning, and coaching. The intent is to use successful aspects of the Lilly-funded program for pastors, including low overhead, encouragement of creativity in grant proposals, an interagency administrative approach, relatively simple application and approval processes, and use of a variety of communication methods to demonstrate appreciation for and understanding of congregations and their leaders.

Information about the program has been sent to pastors and congregations. Two rounds of grants to congregations for "health and renewal" have been completed in the past year. Over seventy congregations have received grants for technology and equipment. In addition, several one-day mutual learning events for pastors, other church leaders, and their spouses have been held. (The SCE Implementation Plan is printed in the *Agenda for Synod 2007*, pages 99-128, which can be accessed on the CRC website at <http://www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm>.)

l. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

The denomination's five-year Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) initiative, funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., ended in December 2007. We were pleased to receive a very positive assessment of the program by an independent evaluator.

Concurrently, we were pleased to learn that the endowment approved our proposal to extend the program through 2012 at a total of \$1 million. SPE will continue to offer grants to pastors for the formation of peer learning groups. It will also encourage pastors' spouses to form such groups.

The program 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.

At the website cited below, a summary of the program can be found, including contact information, vision, program elements, highlights of past years, and plans for 2008:

Website: [www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence](http://www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence)

Email: [pastoralexcellence@crcna.org](mailto:pastoralexcellence@crcna.org)

## 2. 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 2008:

- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Christian Reformed Home Missions

## 3. CRC Foundation

The CRC Foundation in the United States, a Michigan 501(C)(3) corporation, continues to provide support for the ministries and agencies of the denomination and for projects and initiatives that encourage new ministry in the CRCNA. The CRC Foundation-Canada was formed in 2003. Most of the funds that the foundation receives are distributed in the first few years after they are contributed. Beginning in 2008 the foundation will receive funds designated as endowed toward a purpose agreed upon by the donor and the CRC, its agencies, or special ministries. In addition to soliciting donations and providing grants, the foundation directors function as the investment committee for funds given to the foundation or denominational agencies. The CRC Foundation maintains close relationships with the Barnabas Foundation in the United States and Christian Stewardship Services in Canada, and encourages members to engage these organizations for estate planning services.

Dr. Peter Harkema began service as the director of denominational advancement in August 2007. In addition to assisting the foundation in their work, he provides coordination and leadership to the development staff of the various agencies.

## C. *Financial matters*

In order to assure that synod has the most up to date and accurate information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2008—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 2009 (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009), and recommended ministry share amounts for the year 2009. 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.

### III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Keith Oosthoek, chairman of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed 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 beginning in 2009 synod discontinue the provision of woman advisers to synod (II, A, 4).

*Grounds:*

1. Synod 2007 approved the appointment of women delegates to synod.
2. The number of women delegates now exceeds the number of women appointed to serve synod as advisers.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 5).

E. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the reelection of members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 5).

F. That synod change the current practice of presenting a slate of nominees for denominational board and committee positions and that beginning in 2009 only single nominations be required (II, A, 5).

*Grounds:*

1. The culture of volunteerism is changing, with the result that it is increasingly difficult to obtain the concurrence of nominees to be placed in nomination (especially on duos).
2. In the appointment of one out of a slate of two nominees, the interest and service of a potentially viable candidate for future service on the BOT (as well as other boards and committees) is substantially reduced.
3. 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. Nominations are then prepared by the Board and are forwarded to synod for election. Generally, 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).

G. That synod approve that the Board of Trustees no longer be required to appoint alternate members (II, A, 5).

*Grounds:*

1. The elimination of alternate positions makes it possible for thirty additional people to serve on other boards and committees without conflict of time or interest.
2. Alternates who attend Board meetings only occasionally are often unfamiliar with issues and procedures.

H. That, subject to the approval by synod of the above recommendation, the Board requests that all BOT alternate positions be discontinued following Synod 2008 (II, A, 5).

I. That synod empower the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to ratify, on its behalf, its appointment of the new director of Faith Alive Christian Resources when one has been chosen (II, A, 6).

*Grounds:*

1. It is unlikely that the search committee given the task to fill this position will complete its work in time for synod.
2. Because the current incumbent of this position, Mr. Gary Mulder, does not plan to retire until late November 2008, a June 2008 appointment of a replacement would be premature.

J. That synod ratify the appointment of Mr. Chuck Powell to the Christian Reformed World Missions board (II, A, 7).

K. That synod designate, with reservations (as outlined in the report), the New Living Translation (NLT) as one of the versions acceptable for use in CRC worship services (II, A, 8).

*Ground:* The NLT generally meets the requirements of the three principles used as criteria for evaluation for designation of versions acceptable for use in CRC worship services, but the church should also be alerted to the limitations illustrated in the committee's report.

L. That synod adopt the changes proposed by Synod 2007 to Church Order Article 23-d. The revised version follows (II, A, 15):

*d. Ministry associates may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations have economic need and are from a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical.*

M. That synod by way of the printed ballot appoint two members to the Judicial Code Committee for a three-year term (II, A, 18).

N. That synod encourage churches, classes, and CRC institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 29 through October 5, 2008, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 5, 2008 (see Appendix F).

*Grounds:*

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism needs 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 celebrating All Nations Heritage Sunday 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.

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

Board of Trustees of the  
Christian Reformed Church in North America  
Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

## **Appendix A**

### **New Living Translation (NLT) Evaluation Committee Report**

#### **I. Preface and historical background**

#### **II. Criteria for evaluation**

#### **III. Description and characteristics of the NLT**

#### **IV. The committee's evaluation**

A. *Positive features of the NLT*

B. *Limitations of the NLT*

C. *Suggested guidelines for use*

#### **V. Addendum**

#### **VI. Recommendations**

#### **I. Preface and historical background**

In 1999, Overture 25 requested that synod evaluate the New Living Translation (NLT) for use in worship (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 437-38). Synod 1999 did not recommend the NLT (*Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 556-57). The reason for not acceding to Overture 25 appears to have been a reluctance to establish a committee to evaluate that one translation. It did not represent a lack of confidence in the NLT. In 2006, Overture 15 again requested that synod declare the NLT to be acceptable for use in worship services in the CRC (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 525). In response, Synod 2006 directed the Board of Trustees (BOT) "to establish a Translation Committee to review, study, and make recommendations regarding the use of new Bible translations in the churches" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 652).

Rather than establish a standing translation committee, the Board decided to appoint *ad hoc* committees when required in response to specific requests from synod. With respect to the NLT, a committee was established via the Faith Alive Christian Resources board (formerly CRC Publications board). Dr. Emily Brink was appointed as convener of the committee. Seven scholars, four in the area of Old Testament and three in the area of New Testament, were appointed to the committee. The composition of this committee was presented to the BOT and to synod in 2007.

The full committee met in May 2007 to review the mandate, discuss the criteria for evaluation, and divide the specific work of assessing the NLT. Subsequently, correspondence and preliminary reports were circulated via email. The committee reconvened in November 2007 to process the results of the respective evaluations.



## II. Criteria for evaluation

The NLT evaluation committee worked with the three basic principles for the evaluation of new versions of the Bible that have been used in the denomination since 1926. These three principles may be summarized as follows:

- The version must be based on the best text and accurately translated;
- The style of translation must be appropriate for liturgical use; and
- The version must be widely used in other churches.

The evaluation of the American Standard Version (this version was recommended in 1926 and affirmed in 1934) reveals that the primary concern of the first of these principles had to do with the quality of the textual traditions followed in the original languages. Also implicit in that principle was a requirement for accuracy of translation from the original languages into English. The second and third principles require a liturgically appropriate style and ecumenical acceptance of the translation.

## III. Description and characteristics of the NLT

The NLT was first published in 1996. During the following eight years it was subjected to review and refinement that resulted in a revised edition in 2004. In “A Note to Readers” in the preface to the 2004 edition, the publishers of the NLT characterize the goals of this translation as follows:

The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today’s readers as the original text did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and to be read aloud in public worship.

The committee observed that the NLT ordinarily strives for clarity of expression, choosing brevity and simplicity rather than complexity where possible. It also attempts to use vivid language. At times, words or phrases are added to clarify the meaning or to explain imagery. On the spectrum of “dynamic-equivalence” to “word-for-word” translation, it would be located clearly on the side of dynamic-equivalence.

## IV. The committee’s evaluation

The NLT demonstrates many positive features. By virtue of its style and objectives, however, it also has certain limitations. It is not our intention to provide a comprehensive list of what we perceive to be either the strengths or weaknesses. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to illustrate some of the pros and cons of this translation. We hope that this report will assist individuals and congregations of our denomination to weigh the merits of the NLT for their particular context and use.

### A. Positive features of the NLT

In many instances the NLT successfully avoids archaic or enigmatic expressions that would be puzzling to people without prior exposure to biblical language. For example, it translates “large boat” instead of “ark” (Gen. 6:14, *et passim*); “his wisdom in its rich variety” rather than “the manifold wisdom of God” (cf. NIV) in Eph. 3:10. It also avoids words such as “justification,” “sanctification,” and “regeneration,” as carryovers from Latin



translations. In their place it uses equivalents such as “we are made right with God,” “we are made holy,” and “we are born anew.”

In Matthew 7:6 the NLT states, “Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy,” which is more easily comprehensible than most translations (cf. TNIV – “Do not give dogs what is sacred”). Likewise, in Luke 6:24-26, “woe to you” (RSV and NIV) is now more understandable as “what sorrow awaits you.” Consider also Luke 22:1, where the NIV reads, “The hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table.” The NLT captures the sense of the original well with the translation “But here at this table, sitting among us as a friend, is the man who will betray me.” In John 13:18, compare “turned against me” (NLT) with “has lifted up his heel against me” (TNIV). In these and many more examples the NLT has provided a very readable translation that is accurate to the intent of the original text.

As an additional example of more transparent language, one might consider Joshua 20:5. The NLT reads: “If the relatives of the victim come to avenge the killing, the leaders must not release the slayer to them, for he killed the other person unintentionally and without previous hostility.” This reading is less cumbersome, for example, than the NIV (which employs the expressions “avenger of blood” and “because he killed his neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought”).

To enhance communication, the NLT often changes passive verbs to active and employs strong verbs in the translation. For example, Hebrews 1:8: “You rule with a scepter of justice” [compared with “a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom” (TNIV)].

The NLT tends to follow traditional understandings of the correct text. It provides a basis for comparison with translations that represent a different judgment about the original text. Examples compared with the TNIV are found in Matthew 27:17 (“Jesus Barabbas” in the TNIV and “Barabbas” in the NLT), Mark 1:1 (“Jesus the Messiah” in the TNIV, and “Jesus the Messiah, Son of God” in the NLT), and Mark 1:41 (“Jesus was indignant” in the TNIV; “Jesus was moved with compassion” in the NLT). In these cases the NLT has the alternate reading in a footnote.

In conformity with modern usage, the NLT uses inclusive language for human beings, translating, for example, biblical “brothers” with “brothers and sisters,” when both men and women are being addressed, but retaining male language in instances where an all male audience is assumed (as in the address to the first synod in Acts 15:7). In all cases, masculine nouns and pronouns for God have been retained.

The NLT frequently provides good explanatory footnotes. For example, in the book of Acts see 2:1 (explaining the timing of Pentecost), 2:39 (providing an alternate translation of the Greek), 7:2 (explaining the origins of Abram and Sarai), 12:1 (clarifying which Herod), and 13:13-14 (clarifying the location of Pisidia and Pamphylia).

In short, the NLT often communicates clearly, faithfully, and persuasively in contemporary language.

## B. *Limitations of the NLT*

The style, which leans more to the dynamic-equivalence end of the spectrum, may have the advantage of clear communication, but it also predisposes the resulting text to certain limitations. At times it inadvertently obscures literary devices, allusions, and meanings that are present in the original language.

Despite the claim in the introduction to the NLT, that the translators have sought wherever possible to represent the poetic parallelism of the original languages in natural poetic English, there are instances where poetic parallelism is simply dropped. The result obscures the difference between poetry and prose. For example, in Jeremiah 31:16, the NLT ("Do not weep any longer, for I will reward you") reads like flat prose when compared with "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded" (NIV). Similarly, in Isaiah 40:10 the poetic parallelism is retained in the first half of the verse ("Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm") but the parallelism is suddenly omitted in the last half of the verse ("See, he brings his reward with him"—cf. NIV: "See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him"). Presumably the translator wished to avoid a term like "recompense," but there must be a better solution than to drop the parallel phrase. Within this well-known chapter of Isaiah 40, the NLT's repeated use of the word *shout* (vs. 3, 6, 9) may fail to convey to many readers the nuance of the prophetic *calling out* that is envisioned (cf. the comfort and tenderness of vv. 1-2), evoking instead images resembling a loud shouting match.

The NLT paraphrasing at times creates the impression that literary devices are present where they are not actually found in the original text. For example, the NLT use of the word *today* in Joshua 3:7, 10 creates a literary association not found in the Hebrew (where the word *today* is used only in verse 7). This is significant because the Hebrew text of Joshua frequently employs the term *today* or *this day* as a key word.

The concerns noted by the committee extend beyond these failures to represent subtleties in the Hebrew text. A closer look at some examples from the narratives about Joseph in Genesis shows how the less-than-literal translation of the NLT may inappropriately nuance the narrative. Consider the following details:

Gen. 37:2 — The NLT states that "Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing." The Hebrew text, in fact, is much more subtle, stating that Joseph brought a bad report, which leaves open the possibility that Joseph could in fact be blameworthy in bringing such a report.

Gen. 38:7 — The NLT reads, "They hated him all the more because of his dreams and *the way he talked about them*." The Hebrew could be translated more literally "*and because of his words*." The original text does not limit the brothers' hatred to Joseph's talk about the dreams, but extends it to his words (about anything!), thus allowing for a far greater hatred.

Gen. 37:15 — The Hebrew has "a man found him wandering around." NLT inserts an odd addition: "a man *from the area* found him wandering around." The identity of this man is the subject of some speculation. Some hold that it was an angel who guided Joseph. All of the mystery is drained by the speculative addition in the NLT.

Gen. 37:26 — The NLT says, "What will we gain by killing our brother? *His blood would just give us a guilty conscience*." The Hebrew has "... and cover up

his blood.” The Hebrew indicates that the brothers were worried about how they would conceal the crime, not how it would affect their conscience. In fact, the whole point of the narrative is that their actions were unconscionable!

Gen. 38:1 — Hebrew: “Judah . . . turned aside unto an Adullamite whose name was Hirah”; NLT says, “Judah . . . moved to Adullam, where he stayed with a man named Hirah.” Note that the original text does not say that Judah moved to Adullam, but only that his host was from there.

It is also noteworthy that in Gen. 37, 38, 42 the key textual theme of “recognition” tends to be obscured in the NLT by employment of different verbs that do not make the connections evident.

These examples demonstrate that, although the NLT has produced a readable version that is generally accurate to the intent of the original, the tendency to paraphrase at times obscures the original text.

In the Psalms, it appears that the NLT ordinarily attempts to avoid translating *tsedeq* as righteousness. For example, in Psalm 9:8, “He will judge the world with justice (*tsedeq*) and rule the nations with fairness” (cf. also Ps. 48:10, where it is translated as “victory” and 72:2, translated as “right way,” and so forth). Nevertheless, Psalm 17:15 says (in reference to the human subject), “But because I am righteous (*tsedeq*) I will see you.” Oddly, in Psalm 71:2, with reference to God, *tsedeq* is translated “do what is right,” but in verses 15, 19, and 24, still with reference to God, *tsedeq* is translated as “righteousness.” This inconsistent and seemingly arbitrary way of translating a key concept in the Psalms is not helpful.

Also in the Psalms, the important concept of the gathered people of God tends to get lost in translation when the NLT avoids words like *congregation* or *assembly*. And, with respect to style, in Psalm 73:7 the translation “These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for!” may be contemporary language but it is also rather colloquial.

The NLT may go too far in the effort to remove ambiguities present in the original texts. For example, in 2 Corinthians 12:2 the TNIV translates, “I know a man in Christ who . . . was caught up to the third heaven” (like the Greek, leaving the precise identity of the man unspecified). The NLT, however, reads “I was caught up to the third heaven.” The identification may be correct, but this becomes more a matter of commentary than translation. The Hebrew of Jeremiah 31:22 says, “A woman will surround a man,” but the NLT translates, “Israel will embrace her God.”

A case of unwarranted interpolation to remove potential ambiguity is found in Joshua 4:9: “Joshua also set up *another pile* of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day” (cf. NIV: “Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day”). The Hebrew allows ambiguity as to whether the stones were piled where the priests were standing in the Jordan or simply taken from where they were standing and piled later at a designated place on the shore. The NLT chooses to eliminate any apparent or potential conflict by assuming that two memorials were made—which takes the process of translation to the secondary level of apologetics.

Some translation choices may be determined more by theology than precise grammar. In Acts 16:15, speaking of Lydia and her household, the NLT says: “She was baptized *along with other members* of her household.” The NIV, by comparison, reads: “she and *the members* of her household were baptized.” Is the less precise NLT reading, which implies *some* rather than *all* members, motivated by the role this verse has played in discussions of infant baptism?

#### C. *Suggested guidelines for use*

The preceding sections have attempted to illustrate the positive features of the NLT as well as some of the limiting characteristics. In the opinion of the evaluating committee, the limitations are not of such a nature that they would disqualify this translation from any use in worship services. Nevertheless, the cautions are significant enough that they ought to be noted and considered when evaluating the usefulness of this version.

The NLT could be particularly appropriate for congregations with a majority of new believers who have not grown up with traditional scriptural language. Its clear, contemporary style and its avoidance of archaisms and complex theological terminology make the scriptures accessible for new readers.

When employed for Bible study, we would suggest that the NLT be used as a translation alongside of one or more other recognized translations. This is not the first version that we would recommend for detailed exegetical work, although comparing it with other translations will have the benefit of alerting the reader to various options. We suggest that a congregation that already has another recognized version need not hasten to replace it with the NLT.

### V. Addendum

Although it is beyond the mandate of the present committee to evaluate the CRC’s procedures by which translations are designated acceptable for use in worship services, the committee does wish to comment briefly on the process by which the English Standard Version (ESV) was awarded that status by Synod 2007. The committee notes with regret that the ESV was not referred by synod to an evaluation committee. Instead, in immediate response to an overture and by recommendation of an advisory committee, it was designated by Synod 2007 as being acceptable for use in CRC worship services (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 596). That process, we believe, ought not to be viewed as precedent for the evaluation of other versions. The CRC has had a long and justifiable history of submitting translations to closer committee scrutiny prior to their receiving official designation within our denomination. Similar diligence ought to be maintained in the assessment of all versions.

### VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Dean Deppe and Dr. William T. Koopmans when this report is discussed.

B. That synod designate, with reservations (as outlined in the report), the New Living Translation (NLT) as one of the versions acceptable for use in CRC worship services.

*Ground:* The NLT generally meets the requirements of the three principles used as criteria for evaluation for designation of versions acceptable for use in CRC worship services, but the church should also be alerted to the limitations illustrated in the committee's report.

New Living Translation Committee  
Emily R. Brink, convener  
Dean Deppe  
Lisa J. Hoogeboom  
William T. Koopmans, reporter  
Clayton Libolt  
Thomas Niehof  
Derk Oostendorp  
Michael Williams

## **Appendix B**

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

### **I. Introduction**

The mandate for the Office of Abuse Prevention is to provide educational resources, develop policies and procedures, and conduct training events. These three activities revolve around two core goals: reduce the risk of abuse in the church setting and respond with justice and compassion when abuse has occurred.

### **II. Accomplishments**

A. The Office of Abuse Prevention together with the churches reached an important milestone in 2007. Of the 1,057 congregations in the United States and Canada, 552 have adopted a child safety policy.

B. The Office of Abuse Prevention sponsored Abuse Awareness in February 2007. Thirty churches in the United States and Canada responded to the invitation to learn more about abuse. In total, 2,422 booklets and pamphlets on different aspects of abuse were distributed.

C. The Office of Abuse Prevention continues to conduct training across Canada and the United States. Addressing child safety is the most popular topic, but there are other forms and facets to abuse. Two topic areas that receive increasing attention are pornography and internet safety.

### **III. Challenges**

A. In 2007 the Office of Abuse Prevention surveyed the classes about the safe church team and its services. Sixteen of forty-seven classes responded; eight reported the availability of a safe church team, and eight reported they did not have a team. Two of the eight classes without a team indicated they would ask regional pastors, church visitors, or the classical interim committee for assistance if an allegation arose against a church leader in that classis. The other six classes indicated they had no alternative if an allegation arose.

The eight classes without a safe church team also did not have any provision for education to the local churches.

The comment section from the survey gives a glimpse into some struggles classes have:

- Resistance to forming a team is strong.
- Classis wants to develop more educational opportunities.
- Forming a team is a spiritual battle.
- A team is hard to implement within our geographical area.

Of the eight classes with a safe church team, six classes reported that education and resources were available through the team to the local churches.

We should acknowledge that there is a de facto regional advisory panel system. With one or two exceptions, a victim of church leader misconduct has access to an advisory panel process. In some instances, the cost of offering a regional advisory panel for the accuser and accused will be significantly more than if a local panel is available.

If we expect existing safe church teams to fill the broader role of a regional team, it is vital that existing team members remain active. Team members need to refresh their understanding of abuse dynamics, and it is important to develop leaders on the respective teams and for the advisory panel process.

B. From experience with nearly twenty advisory panels over the past ten years, there are two specific challenges to mention. The first challenge lies in encouraging church leaders to avoid the temptation to quickly forgive and smooth things over following the disclosure of church leader misconduct. A disclosure has the power to rip a family and a congregation apart. To avoid that pain and result, one often moves to find a quick solution. Rarely, however, is abuse healed or individuals restored through a quickly negotiated event. Forgiveness and restoration are a process.

The second challenge lies in overcoming our inconsistent efforts to help victims and offenders journey through forgiveness and restoration. Despite our deep theological roots into God's grace, practicing forgiveness and living restoration remain elusive for many. The church needs protocols on forgiveness and restoration to assist in helping others heal from abuse.

Some of the identifiable issues:

- Church councils and church leaders grant forgiveness rather than allowing the victim the opportunity to do so or even to hear the offender's confession.
- Church councils and church leaders find it difficult to believe that a consequence is part of justice-making; they are more likely to see a consequence as punitive and un-forgiving.
- Church councils and church leaders believe that restoration is the responsibility of the victim; if the victim is not ready, then nothing can be done.

C. Our response to victims and offenders will always be part of the church's ministry. Through interaction with the victim and offender, we understand more clearly the depravity of sin, the broken relationships that result from sin, and the need for God's grace and restoration. We also have a moral duty to stem the harmful interactions that continue to occur. The best strategy we

have to prevent abuse and misconduct is to educate church leaders and our faith communities.

For several years, the Pastoral Care class at Calvin Theological Seminary has offered abuse awareness to its students. The seminary has made this commitment to train future pastors and leaders. This commitment alone is not sufficient. We challenge each classis and each church to commit to one hour of training on abuse prevention in the coming year.

## **Appendix C**

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

#### **I. Introduction**

This is the last report by the current director, Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., as he has asked and been granted permission to retire as director of Chaplaincy Ministries. Rev. Keizer has served 34 years as an Army chaplain and since March 2002 as the director of Chaplaincy Ministries. It is a source of wonder that secular institutions hire men and women of faith to serve the religious/spiritual needs of persons in their institutions. The image of God in his human creature is so transparent that attention to the spiritual health of a person is worth the expense. If the Christian Reformed Church in North America would have to pay the salary and benefits for the chaplains it sends into specialized institutions, the bill would surpass six million dollars. God has given us a great gift in Chaplaincy Ministries. To him we give the glory!

#### *A. Major responsibilities*

1. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries recruits persons interested in chaplaincy from colleges and seminaries, from people seeking specialized ministry opportunities, and from pastors in parish ministry who meet the requirements to minister in specialized settings.
2. Chaplaincy Ministries manages the processes that lead to endorsement by working with the calling church to ensure the process is conducted according to Church Order, by reviewing the duty description, by conducting personal interviews, by endorsing the person for a chaplain's position, and by covenanting with the chaplain and the calling church for joint supervisory and oversight responsibilities.
3. Chaplaincy Ministries provides chaplains with personal and professional support through periodic site visits, monthly email newsletter updates, regional cluster meetings, and an annual professional development conference.
4. Chaplaincy Ministries develops public-relations programs to build support for chaplaincy ministries in the CRCNA.
5. An important role for Chaplaincy Ministries is participation in governmental and professional organizations. Decisions made by these organizations affect the level of training required by chaplains. The endorsers of chaplains ensure that the ministry of chaplains is connected to the faith communities that endorse the chaplain. Most of our civilian chaplains



have membership and leadership roles in the following organizations: The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, and the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education. Many of our chaplains are board-certified chaplains.

#### *B. Statistics*

1. Total chaplains: full-time, 91; part-time, 22; National Guard and Reserves, 7
2. Chaplains in the United States: full-time, 77; part-time, 18
3. Chaplains in Canada: full-time, 14; part-time, 4
4. Active military chaplains: 14 in United States; 2 in Canada; 7 in the National Guard and Reserves
5. New chaplains, 6; Civilian: Brent A. Janke, Kristen J. Pikaart, JoAnn Liefers Swart, Andrew Spriensma; Military: Nicholas R. Davelaar (U.S. Air Force Reserve), and Gerald P. Van Smeerdyk (Canadian Armed Forces). With sadness, we report that our newest chaplain, Theodore P. Vellenga, was killed in an auto accident in December 2007.
6. Retirees, 5: Civilian: Markus J. Lise, George J. Van Arragon, and Karl J. Wiersum; Military: Melvin J. Flikkema. With sadness, we also mourn the death of Karl J. Wiersum in October 2007.
7. Chaplains who served overseas this year – Iraq: Robert L. Bierenga, William C. Hensen, InSoon Gho Hoagland, Peter T. Hofman, Gordon A. Terpstra; Spain: Thomas J. Walcott; Korea: Charles R. Cornelisse.

#### *C. National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF)*

Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., assumed the chair of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) in January 2006. The NCMAF is a unique, diverse body of military-chaplain endorsers from 175 faith communities with a constituency of over 150 million members that endorse 5,429, or over 70 percent, of all military chaplains. The executive committee meets three times a year and an annual conference is held each year. Continuing this year was the controversy over the chaplain's public, ceremonial prayer in mandatory formations or meetings. The U.S. House of Representatives introduced language in legislation that was objectionable to the Department of Defense, the Service Chiefs of Chaplains, and the members of the NCMAF. The legislation did not make the final bill.

#### *D. Restorative justice*

Oversight responsibility for restorative justice was written into the job description of the director of Chaplaincy Ministries. Useful educational materials were placed in the Faith Alive catalog. We partnered with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching to produce materials for use in worship addressing restorative justice. In Canada and in some churches in the United States, Restorative Justice Week was celebrated. Rev. John deVries, Jr., volunteered to take some leadership for Canada and has formed a Restorative Justice Advisory Group.



### *E. War and peace*

1. To implement some of the recommendations of Synod 2006, Chaplaincy Ministries features materials on its website to assist in the pastoral care of those serving and those leaving military service. The advance in military battlefield medicine has greatly reduced the number of persons killed in action, but there is a related increase in the number of wounded. The incidence of post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury is very high for returning veterans. The material on the Chaplaincy Ministries home page is meant to help the local churches care for our veterans. All returning veterans provide the church an opportunity for witnessing to the mercy and compassion of our Lord.
2. The director of Chaplaincy Ministries is in dialogue with the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel police to change the Directive on Conscientious Objection and to encourage the Congress to change the law to allow for Selective Conscientious Objection. We are partnering with religious communities that stand in the just war tradition to solicit their support for changing the Conscientious Objection Laws. Canada has also discussed and proposed legislation to accommodate those who flee the United States and seek political refuge in Canada.
3. The director of Chaplaincy Ministries is in discussion with the Department of Defense (DoD) on the definition of preventive war, which DoD now defines as “a war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve greater risk.” DoD defines preemptive war as “an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent.” Several ethics scholars in the just war tradition have been notified of the new definitions and encouraged to address these in their scholarly presentations and publications.
4. Working with Calvin College and other Christian institutions of higher education, we have created courses that deal with peace and the recommendations of the synodical study committee report.
5. A small group has been formed to develop some curricula for the CRC on issues of peace and the biblical framework for being peacemakers in our world.

### *F. Canadian Chaplaincy Ministries*

An overture to Synod 2007 recommended the reinstatement of the position of a Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries. There is a need for some person to assume responsibility for the chaplaincy in Canada. There are some striking differences between the policies of governmental agencies, institutions, and professional organizations in Canada and those in the United States.

### *G. Challenges to Chaplaincy Ministries*

1. We hope to develop a mechanism in Canada to take the lead on Chaplaincy Ministries and restorative justice.

2. We hope to solicit from leaders of our institutions of higher education and faculty members to work closely with the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action to produce material for use in the churches.
3. Recruitment for new chaplains is an ongoing challenge. We are placing more emphasis on recruiting in our colleges. Calvin Theological Seminary has been very open to presenting the challenge of chaplain ministry to the student body.
4. Recruiting for military and federal prison chaplaincy has become critical. The war in Iraq has made recruiting for the National Guard and Reserves a major challenge. Recruiting for these ministries is made more difficult by the age requirements for these positions. The overcrowding of our prisons place high demands on prison staff and inmates. Our military and criminal justice organizations provide the church with fertile fields for ministry at little or no financial cost.
5. Encouraging professional chaplaincy to our aging population is a challenge and an opportunity for ministry. Hospice care has been a tremendous blessing to the dying and their families. Senior citizen and retirement communities represent a growing industry. Pastors and elders can assist Chaplaincy Ministries by encouraging these centers to employ trained chaplains.
6. Assisting employers in providing ministry in factories, businesses, and industrial settings is increasingly in demand. Employers are more and more aware of the financial benefits of providing their employees with social and religious service in the workplace.

## II. Conclusion

The Christian Reformed Church in North America can celebrate its contribution to the ministry of chaplains from local ministry settings to national organizations in both the United States and in Canada. Chaplaincy Ministries assists the church in sending men and women of faith into places where the church is often unable to go. Our chaplains help people come to grips with many vexing questions about suffering, death, loss, war, and crime, and they assist persons in finding meaning for their lives. In this year when we begin year 151 as a church, the Christian Reformed Church will continue to send chaplains into many diverse settings where they can witness to the love of God in Christ and they are constant reminders of the hope we have in Christ, our Lord.

## Appendix D

**Disability Concerns** (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

### I. Introduction

The Office of Disability Concerns has served Christian Reformed churches for over 25 years to help them become hospitable, inclusive, and healthy communities that intentionally seek to

- end the isolation and disconnectedness of persons with disabilities and their families.
- nurture the spiritual lives of people with disabilities so that they become professing and active members of their churches.
- encourage the gifts of people with disabilities so that they can serve God in every area of their lives.

In two short sentences, the desired outcome of our work is that in every Christian Reformed church: Everybody belongs. Everybody serves. Success in this work will advance many of the Ministries Plan Scorecard objectives, but especially these two: “Transform lives and communities worldwide,” and “Create and sustain healthy congregations.”

## **II. The work of the Office of Disability Concerns**

A team of people from the Office of Disability Concerns assists churches in this work. This team includes some 550 church disability advocates, some forty regional disability advocates, seven agency advocates working within the CRC agencies, as well as a director and two part-time administrative assistants. Regional Disability Concerns committees are active in Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario. In the past year this team has

- sponsored conferences on disability and inclusion, training some 300 people.
- offered training on inclusion at several Days of Encouragement and classis meetings.
- distributed *Breaking Barriers*, our quarterly newsletter, to some 65,000 individuals, families, churches, and agencies.
- translated *Breaking Barriers* into Spanish and made it available on our website.
- supplied a Disability Awareness worship packet and resources to all CRCs in celebration of our 25th anniversary in 2007.
- consulted directly with many CRCs.
- published a book for training council and care team members in pastoral care written by John Cook: *A Compassionate Journey: Coming Alongside People with Disabilities or Chronic Illnesses*.

In addition, the Office of Disability Concerns received two grants for training churches and church leadership in inclusion of people with disabilities. The first grant, made in partnership with three other organizations, was provided through the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to help churches with worship renewal, especially through the inclusion of people with disabilities. The partner organizations are the CLC Network, the Gray Center, and Friendship Ministries. The second grant, provided through Sustaining Pastoral Excellence funds, was used to train church leadership using our new book: *A Compassionate Journey*.

We measure the effectiveness of our work primarily through a page distributed with the annual CRC *Yearbook* survey. The survey information provided by churches is extremely valuable for us to work effectively. It indicates that churches more and more have been grasping the biblical vision to remove barriers to participation by and enhance their hospitality to people with disabilities.

- Architectural barriers: Five years ago, about half of Christian Reformed churches had an accessible worship area. Now nearly 85 percent do. Today nearly 70 percent of Christian Reformed churches are fully accessible (when not counting the pulpit area). This is up from less than 50 percent in 2002.
- Communication barriers: Over 500 CRCs provide aids for people who are hard of hearing and deaf, and 444 provide aids for people with visual impairments.
- Attitudinal barriers: More Christian Reformed churches are “mainstreaming” children and youth with disabilities in their educational programming. Several churches have worship services specifically tailored to be inclusive, and some have paid staff positions to enhance ministry with people with disabilities. Over 500 churches provide transportation for people with disabilities, and 268 report that they have Friendship groups and/or other special programs. However, only 212 Christian Reformed churches have committed themselves formally to ministry with people with disabilities by adopting the Church Policy on Disabilities written by the Office of Disability Concerns which is available on the website.

The Office of Disability Concerns’ website can be found at [www.crcdisabilityconcerns.org](http://www.crcdisabilityconcerns.org), where users can find a variety of resources for developing an inclusive ministry. Churches can call Disability Concerns toll-free at 888-463-0272.

### III. The challenges we all face

Twenty-three years ago, as a denomination we pledged “to be the caring community according to 1 Corinthians 12, paying special attention to the needs and gifts of people with physical, sensory, mental, and emotional impairments” (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 702). We pledged to overcome attitudinal, communication, and architectural barriers, and “to actively advocate for brothers and sisters with disabilities and to get wounded and devalued people with Christian dignity and compassion, welcoming them and their contributions to the body of believers,” and we pledged “to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God’s family” (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 703). Fifteen years ago we “heartily recommend[ed] 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. 542). We have made strides in fulfilling these vows for which we can praise God. As a result, our churches are healthier, our appreciation of diversity is greater, our outreach is more substantial, and our caring is more inclusive. We must maintain and even increase our dedication and commitment if our church communities are to become more accessible and open to the lives and gifts of people with disabilities.

Currently, in spite of nearly 100 percent coverage in Canadian churches overall, only 50 percent of our congregations have a church disability advocate, a person who will advocate specifically for the needs and concerns of people with disabilities within that church. And overall, one third of our classes lack the help and expertise of a regional disability consultant. Please

contact the Office of Disability Concerns with suggestions of people who can serve well in these capacities.

Our Lord calls on his people to be leaders in hospitality and inclusion of people with disabilities. (For example, see Luke 14:1-24.) Many people in churches feel inadequate for this work; they lack the skills and knowledge to make inclusion happen. Through our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, and our website, through consultations and conferences, through our network of dedicated volunteers and staff people, Office of Disability Concerns seeks to serve all Christian Reformed churches so that the day comes when everybody belongs and everybody serves fully in the life and ministry of their churches.

## **Appendix E**

**Pastor-Church Relations** (Rev. Duane Visser, director; Rev. Norm Thomasma, associate director and educational specialist)

### **I. Introduction**

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) maintains a focus on its mandate to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. Over the twenty-five years of its existence, PCR and the churches have been challenged to recognize that, while these functions remain basic, there are nuances required because of changing culture and programs. We continue to work and plan in response to dynamic directions of the churches and leadership.

The ministry of PCR involves both *direct* involvement with pastors, staff, councils, and congregations, and *extension* or cooperative activities whereby the staff of Pastor-Church Relations are training and supporting others who, in turn, provide direct support to pastors, staff, councils, and congregations.

### **II. Activities**

A. Probably the most familiar activity of Pastor-Church Relations is its *direct* involvement in cultivating healthier relationships within the life of congregations. This may involve interventions when there are conflicts, consultations in which we can assist in ways that work toward healing and growth, and educational activities in which the members and leaders of congregations can learn alternative ways of responding. It is noteworthy that PCR has recently recognized a pattern of earlier calls for consultation and/or intervention, which allows for a more effective process of dealing with concerns in congregations. In addition, we find that, when intervention is called for, committees of classis are intervening more often.

B. PCR *extends* its work through sixty-five regional pastors who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses who are challenged by the demands of life and ministry. These pastors also assist in setting up mentor relationships for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple staff within a congregation. In November 2007 we held the biennial conference for regional pastors in Grand Rapids. One of the key topics was the report of a task force that

considered ways in which the work of regional pastors can be more effective and respond to a changing culture of ministry.

C. Another *extension* initiative has been the organization of training events by PCR staff to assist classes in church visiting. Most agree that the work of church visitors has not received sufficient attention in recent years and, done well, could provide a vital resource for classis and congregation. PCR will continue offering these training events in the coming year.

D. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations continues to advance the work of mentoring new pastors. Mentoring, beginning in the seminary and continuing throughout a pastor's ministry, is seen as a crucial area of pastoral growth and accountability. Through peer groups supported by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program and assigned mentoring relationships, this aspect of encouragement and learning is becoming a key part of pastors' experience.

E. Educational and retreat activities for councils, congregations, classes, and church staff also continue to be a focus of PCR activity. In many ways the educational and intervention activities are closely linked.

F. A corps of specialized transitional ministers are trained to help congregations deal with the challenges during the transition between pastors. For a number of years the denomination has employed several transitional pastors. Currently there are three:

Rev. Larry Slings – Rogers Heights CRC, Wyoming, Michigan

Rev. Leonard Troast – Zutphen CRC, Zutphen, Michigan

Rev. Robert Walter – Chelwood CRC, Albuquerque, New Mexico

There is also a growing number of trained pastors who are serving in this capacity by contracting with congregations themselves. The current challenge has been to provide endorsement and support for these ministers as the direct employment by the denomination is phased out.

With a growing number of recently retired pastors, congregations are also using other pastors as stated supply. These pastors are not working directly with PCR.

G. Through a subcommittee of PCR, the Staff Ministry Committee (SMC), and the leadership of staff ministry specialist Ms. Jeanne Kallemeyn, over 1,200 church staff are being supported in a variety of ways. Opportunities for networking and distribution of resources are offered, and churches are increasingly requesting our services regarding staffing issues. A growing number of churches are considering changes in organizational structure and are requesting models. The SMC facilitated a number of round table meetings on this topic in 2007 and has made plans for additional meetings in 2008. In these meetings, pastors and key staff from several churches come together to learn about structure and staffing from each other. PCR also continues its work on the credentialing process for non-ordained church staff. In addition, we are exploring ways to support the growing number of ministry associates in the CRC.

H. On behalf of synod, Pastor-Church Relations administers a continuing education fund for pastors and professional church staff. Grants of up to \$750 per year are awarded to pastors and staff who demonstrate the value of an educational event and/or opportunity they are pursuing. The number of applications for these funds continues to grow. It is gratifying to experience this growing interest in continuing education. It is also a challenge as the committee makes decisions as to how the funds will be distributed.

I. The Ministerial Information Service maintains a database of more than seven hundred pastor and congregation profiles. These profiles are used by search committees of congregations looking for pastors, and by pastors seeking new positions. Pastor Church Relations, with the assistance of a volunteer committee, will recommend pastoral candidates for search committees. At the beginning of 2008, we received an upgraded computer software program to facilitate the storage and distribution of materials for congregations and pastors.

### **III. Challenges**

A. One of the major challenges affecting PCR will be succession planning, given the planned retirement of Rev. Duane Visser at the end of 2008. His retirement has an impact on budgeting, programming, and a search process. It also provides an opportunity for evaluation of the current programs of PCR.

B. The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program has received a new grant from the Lilly Foundation. The emphases of this program are peer groups for pastors, programs for pastors' spouses, and support for meetings between new candidates for ministry and PCR. In addition to a PCR staff person on the implementation team, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations and the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program share similar goals.

C. PCR is beginning to establish a means for appropriate measurements for its work. In consultation with like agencies and information technologies staff, new possibilities are emerging regarding helpful measures to better gauge what is being done and who PCR is serving.

D. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with newly ordained pastors and church staff. Given the synodical decisions about ministry associates, we are attempting to find ways to better serve this expanding group among the churches. As part of the broader network of denominational entities who work with candidates, PCR also attempts to maintain a working relationship with the Candidacy Committee (formerly Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee).

E. As one of the denominational ministries, PCR continues to explore ways to work with other denominational ministries in addition to responding to congregations, staff, and pastors. It is our goal to encourage healthy ways of doing ministry in the CRCNA.



## **Appendix F**

### **Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)**

The year 2007 was challenging, yet exciting; the Office of Race Relations has again moved forward with its ministries to CRC congregations, agencies, and institutions. Director Rev. Esteban Lugo, working with his team, Mr. Steve Kabetu, Rev. Norberto Wolf, and Ms. Jan Ortiz, continues to disseminate the ministries of Race Relations throughout the denomination.

The Multiethnic Conference was held at Calvin College from June 8-11, 2007. About ninety people attended and were blessed by a message from keynote speaker Dr. Reggie Smith, informative workshops, a ministry fair, a multiethnic worship service, the 150th anniversary celebration, and a session of synod. The next conference will be held in Palos Heights, Illinois, at Trinity Christian College in June 2009.

This year, the Office of Race Relations has awarded \$16,000 in scholarships to students in various CRC institutions. While this amount is about the same as the previous year, we are encouraged by the church's response with All Nations Heritage offerings, which provide the funding for the scholarships.

The Office of Race Relations has developed a new workshop on antiracism/racial reconciliation called Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR). We have been presenting the workshop to employees of the denomination in Grand Rapids, as well as to people in New Jersey, California, Illinois, and Florida. Many of our churches have also held workshops. To date, over four hundred people have participated. We are continually amazed at what God is doing with this work. In 2008 we plan to expand DORR training to reach into Latin and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. In Canada the antiracism training is known as Widening the Circle (WTC). This has also been well received, and we are looking to expand into the western areas of Canada in 2008.

In addition to other activities, a Women of the Nations Summit (for women only) was held for a day and a half in April 2008. It was a blessing to the women who were able to attend. We are hoping to promote similar summits in other areas of the country by 2009.

The denomination places a high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in our life together as a church. To that end, the ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. However, many challenges and changes still lie ahead for this ministry. Race Relations and the CRCNA are committed to the statement of vision and mandate to make the CRCNA a truly diverse and unified family of God. We covet your prayers to this end.

The Office of Race Relations continues to promote and support All Nations Heritage celebrations by providing bulletins, worship resources, and advice to help congregations celebrate our God-given diversity. It is our hope that more and more churches will join in this celebration. The Office of Race Relations requests that synod encourage churches, classes, and CRC institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 29 through October 5, 2008, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 5.



*Grounds:*

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism needs 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 celebrating All Nations Heritage Sunday 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 G**

### **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 and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues. The OSJHA is also occasionally 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 summary of 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.

#### **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.

1. With the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the OSJHA has introduced a global Christian movement, the Micah Challenge, to the CRC. The Micah Challenge, which was endorsed by Synod 2004, encourages Christians to deepen their engagement with the poor and challenges government leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are eight measurable, time-bound targets that address poverty and hunger and their root causes. The OSJHA and CRWRC are particularly excited to engage a new generation of young Christian Reformed people in global justice and poverty issues through innovative websites ([www.micahmorphosis.org](http://www.micahmorphosis.org)) and campus visits and organizing. We look forward to collaborating on service-learning opportunities, concerts, college courses, and more.
2. In addition to promoting the Micah Challenge within the Christian Reformed Church, the OSJHA has the honor of acting as the organizing headquarters for the U.S. national Micah Challenge campaign. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen was selected in June 2005 to be the coordinator for Micah Challenge USA; he co-chairs a steering committee of numerous representatives from evangelical denominations and Christian organizations from around the country. (The CRC has also been active in leadership of the Canadian Micah Challenge campaign, mainly through its CRWRC Canadian director.) Because the United States and Canada, for better and for worse, play such key roles in the international order, the Micah Challenge in the United States and in Canada is poised to play critical roles in the struggle to bring attention and action to overcoming poverty. The CRC is in the center of this struggle.
3. *The Advocate* is our monthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered in both electronic and paper form to nearly two thousand recipients each month and supplies a unique Christian Reformed perspective on social justice news and events. To subscribe, visit [www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org) and click on *The Advocate* newsletter link.
4. The OSJHA website ([www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org)) serves more than fifteen hundred visitors a month. In addition to providing news and advocacy opportunities, the site supplies practical resources and helpful information to pastors, deacons, social justice committees, students, and every CRC member who wants to live the call to do justice. Another exciting online resource is [justiceseekers.ning.com](http://justiceseekers.ning.com), an interactive website for CRC advocates to learn, speak, and act as agents of social justice.
5. *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 Christian Resources by calling 1-800-333-8300 or by visiting [www.faithaliveresources.org](http://www.faithaliveresources.org).
6. In Canada, network building includes regular workshops at diaconal conferences, Days of Encouragement, and other venues (i.e., adult Sunday school). The Micah Challenge continues to provide many opportunities to introduce social justice into Canadian congregations and social justice groups.

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. We are actively involved in encouraging churches and their members to participate in the Micah Challenge and related ONE and Make Poverty History campaigns. By wearing the white band, a symbol of solidarity and action with the poor, and by urging our government leaders to meet their public promises on behalf of the world's most vulnerable people, Christians can be a driving force to make extreme poverty and hunger history in our time. Those who wish to learn more can visit our website at [www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org) or the Micah Challenge website at [www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org).
2. In Canada we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; we also work with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.
3. We facilitate advocacy to Washington, D.C., or Ottawa, Ontario (in partnership with the Committee for Contact with the Government), when appropriate, for our areas of focus. This year such ad hoc advocacy included the farm bill, the jubilee act, and the global poverty act.

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 and mercy.

## Appendix H

### Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

#### Back to God Hour Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,294	-	-	-	2,294
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	3,478	1,956	538	100	6,072
Receivables & Advances	87	-	-	-	87
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	553	-	-	-	553
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>6,412</b>	<b>1,956</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9,006</b>
Accounts Payable	655	-	-	-	655
Notes/Loans Payable	765	-	-	-	765
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,191	-	-	-	1,191
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,611</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,611</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 3,801</b>	<b>1,956</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,395</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. Income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Isaac Jen endowment fund.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Hour  
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	4,489	\$	4,258
% of Total Income		45.5%		41.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,686	\$	4,014
Estate Gifts	\$	1,375	\$	1,414
Total Gift Income		5,061		5,428
% of Total Income		51.3%		52.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	62
Miscellaneous	\$	322	\$	554
Total Other Income		322		616
% of Total Income		3.3%		6.0%
TOTAL INCOME		9,872		10,302
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
English	\$	2,771	\$	2,028
FTEs		10		10
International	\$	4,011	\$	4,749
FTEs		13		13
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-		-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,782	\$	6,777
Total Program Service FTEs		23		23
% of Total \$		75.2%		72.2%
% of Total FTEs		69.7%		69.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	755	\$	894
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,483	\$	1,712
FTEs		6		6
Total Support Service \$		2,238		2,606
Total Support Service FTEs		10		10
% of Total \$		24.8%		27.8%
% of Total FTEs		30.3%		30.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,020	\$	9,383
TOTAL FTEs		33		33
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	852	\$	919

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

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 689	-	-	-	689
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	33,144	-	4,438	7,148	44,730
Inventory	429	-	-	-	429
Prepays & Advances	1,712	-	1	-	1,713
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,377	-	-	590	3,967
Equities	75,821	-	6,382	82,229	164,432
Partnerships	3,032	-	-	8,282	11,314
Property (nonoperating)	235	-	-	6,374	6,609
PP & E	135,572	-	-	-	135,572
Other	-	-	-	1,598	1,598
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>254,011</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10,821</b>	<b>106,221</b>	<b>371,053</b>
Accounts Payable	5,796	-	-	-	5,796
Notes/Loans Payable	48,509	-	-	275	48,784
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	7,722	-	-	-	7,722
Deferred Income	1,278	-	17	-	1,295
Other	37,369	-	155	44	37,568
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>100,674</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>101,165</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 153,337</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10,649</b>	<b>105,902</b>	<b>269,888</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Over 1,866 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowed gifts.				

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

	Fiscal 05-06 Actual	Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,896	\$ 2,769
% of Total Income	2.8%	2.5%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 2,730	\$ 2,788
Estate Gifts	\$ 7	\$ 23
Total Gift Income	2,737	2,811
% of Total Income	2.7%	2.5%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 94,912	\$ 102,157
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,729	\$ 3,687
Total Other Income	97,641	105,844
% of Total Income	94.5%	95.0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>103,274</b>	<b>111,424</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 87,923	\$ 94,540
FTEs	597	592
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	87,923	94,540
Total Program Service FTEs	597	592
% of Total \$	86.9%	86.8%
% of Total FTEs	80.7%	78.7%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 4,992	\$ 5,789
FTEs	61	64
Plant Operations	\$ 5,651	\$ 6,314
FTEs	57	66
Fund-raising	\$ 2,597	\$ 2,258
FTEs	25	30
Total Support Service \$	13,240	14,361
Total Support Service FTEs	143	160
% of Total \$	13.1%	13.2%
% of Total FTEs	19.3%	21.3%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 101,163</b>	<b>\$ 108,901</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>752</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$ 2,111</b>	<b>\$ 2,523</b>

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

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,853	-	-	-	1,853
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	640	-	1,561	-	2,201
Receivables & Advances	32	901	225	-	1,158
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	281	-	-	-	281
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,763	-	19	-	10,782
Other	159	-	1,474	-	1,633
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>13,728</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>3,279</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,908</b>
Accounts Payable	(49)	2,039	7	-	1,997
Notes/Loans Payable	258	301	-	-	559
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	151	-	-	-	151
Other	675	-	805	-	1,480
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,035</b>	<b>2,340</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,187</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 12,693</b>	<b>(1,439)</b>	<b>2,467</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>13,721</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds \$31,253M, Annuity payable \$264M 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 Theological Seminary  
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	2,695	\$	2,898
% of Total Income		44.2%		46.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	767	\$	801
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	13
Total Gift Income		767		814
% of Total Income		12.6%		12.9%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	1,984	\$	2,026
Grants	\$	542	\$	442
Miscellaneous	\$	107	\$	108
Total Other Income		2,633		2,576
% of Total Income		43.2%		41.0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>6,095</b>		<b>6,288</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,585	\$	2,715
FTEs		27		28
Public Service	\$	52	\$	51
FTEs		1		1
Academic Support	\$	867	\$	932
FTEs		4		4
Student Services	\$	488	\$	524
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	242	\$	226
FTEs		2		2
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,234	\$	4,448
Total Program Service FTEs		38		39
% of Total \$		73.5%		71.6%
% of Total FTEs		77.6%		75.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	790	\$	913
FTEs		6		7
Plant Operations	\$	382	\$	474
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising	\$	351	\$	377
FTEs		4		5
Total Support Service \$		1,523		1,764
Total Support Service FTEs		11		13
% of Total \$		26.5%		28.4%
% of Total FTEs		22.4%		25.0%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,757</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>6,212</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>49</b>		<b>52</b>
				(533)
<b>NET INCOME (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(457)</b>

\$-532,729 Cumulative effect of change in retirement accounting principle

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

	December 31, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,467	-	-	-	1,467
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	835	-	-	-	835
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	256	-	-	-	256
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,215	-	-	-	3,215
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>5,773</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,773</b>
Accounts Payable	55	-	-	-	55
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	884	-	-	-	884
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>939</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 4,834</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,834</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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)**

	2006 Actual	2007 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>		
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	\$ 8,766	\$ 9,955
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 209	\$ 276
Total Other Income	8,975	10,231
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>	<b>8,975</b>	<b>10,231</b>
<b>DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):</b>		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 7,840	\$ 8,644
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 412	\$ 464
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 592	\$ 644
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 8,844	\$ 9,752
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	97.8%	98.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 198	\$ 202
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	198	202
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$ 9,042</b>	<b>\$ 9,954</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)</b>	<b>\$ (67)</b>	<b>\$ 277</b>

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

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,284	-	235	-	2,519
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,646	-	31	-	2,677
Inventory	466	-	-	-	466
Prepays & Advances	117	-	-	-	117
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	649	-	-	-	649
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,756	-	-	-	5,756
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>11,918</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12,184</b>
Accounts Payable	1,935	-	-	-	1,935
Notes/Loans Payable	726	-	-	-	726
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	35	-	-	-	35
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,696</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,696</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 9,222</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,488</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program.				
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Includes \$235,000 of Lilly Foundation grant balance.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

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

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	2,260	\$	2,896
% of Total Income		80.5%		82.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	422	\$	91
Estate Gifts	\$	1	\$	-
Total Gift Income		423		91
% of Total Income		15.1%		2.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	92	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	31	\$	536
Total Other Income		123		536
% of Total Income		4.4%		15.2%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>2,806</b>		<b>3,523</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	1,159	\$	2,119
FTEs		5		5
Communications	\$	222	\$	245
FTEs		3		3
CRCPlan	\$	141	\$	136
FTEs		1		1
Sea to Sea grants	\$	820		-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	2,342	\$	2,500
Total Program Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total \$		70.5%		73.1%
% of Total FTEs		64.3%		64.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	923	\$	871
FTEs		4		4
D.D.M.				
FTEs				
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$	55	\$	50
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		978		921
Total Support Service FTEs		5		5
% of Total \$		29.5%		26.9%
% of Total FTEs		35.7%		35.7%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,320</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,421</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>14</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(514)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>102</b>

incls \$379 Sea to Sea

Sea to Sea payout

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

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
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	\$	5,093	\$	4,704
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	4,176	\$	5,216
Total Other Income		9,269		9,920
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		9,269		9,920
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$	5,265	\$	5,075
FTEs		29		28
Finance/Payroll/Development	\$	2,085	\$	2,337
FTEs		21		25
Information Technologies	\$	908	\$	1,107
FTEs		7		8
Human Resources	\$	186	\$	447
FTEs		2		4
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,444	\$	8,966
Total Program Service FTEs		59		65
% of Total \$		91.1%		90.4%
% of Total FTEs		95.2%		95.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General				
FTEs				
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	825	\$	954
FTEs		3		3
Fund-raising (Foundation)				
FTEs				
Total Support Service \$		825		954
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total \$		8.9%		9.6%
% of Total FTEs		4.8%		4.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,269	\$	9,920
TOTAL FTEs		62		68
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	-	\$	-

**Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)**  
**Balance Sheet (000s)**

	December 31, 2007			
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.
Cash	\$ 302	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	278		-	-
Equities	2,485		-	-
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	131		-	-
Property (nonoperating)			-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3,196</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 3,196</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>				
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 - Canada (in Canadian \$)**  
**Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

		2006 Actual		2007 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>				
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	\$	277	\$	299
Participant Contributions	\$	10	\$	22
Miscellaneous	\$	281	\$	51
Total Other Income		568		372
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>		<b>568</b>		<b>372</b>
<b>DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$	99	\$	214
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	99	\$	214
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs				
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs				
<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>-</b>
<b>NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>158</b>



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

	December 31, 2007			
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	3,187	-	-	-
Equities	14,576	-	-	-
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	4,033	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>21,796</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Accounts Payable	4	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 21,792</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>				
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)**

	2006 Actual	2007 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>		
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	\$ 1,015	\$ 1,117
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,896	\$ 1,635
Total Other Income	2,911	2,752
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>	<b>2,911</b>	<b>2,752</b>
<b>DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):</b>		
Program Services:		
Distributions	\$ 996	\$ 943
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 996	\$ 943
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	94.1%	93.6%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 63	\$ 65
FTEs	1	1
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	63	65
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1
% of Total \$	5.9%	6.4%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$ 1,059</b>	<b>\$ 1,008</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)</b>	<b>\$ 1,852</b>	<b>\$ 1,744</b>

**FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES**  
**Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 305	-	8	-	313
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	378	-	200	-	578
Inventory	2,065	-	-	-	2,065
Prepays & Advances	38	-	-	-	38
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	1,433	1,300	-	-	2,733
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	12	-	-	-	12
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>4,231</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,739</b>
Accounts Payable	411	-	-	-	411
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	94	-	-	-	94
Other	200	-	-	-	200
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>705</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 3,526</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,034</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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.					

**FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES**  
**Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	918	\$	1,051
% of Total Income		14.3%		15.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	325	\$	295
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		325		295
% of Total Income		5.0%		4.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,778	\$	4,536
Grants	\$	264	\$	418
Miscellaneous	\$	154	\$	371
Total Other Income		5,196		5,325
% of Total Income		80.7%		79.8%
TOTAL INCOME		6,439		6,671
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	1,251	\$	1,234
FTEs		4		4
Education	\$	3,717	\$	3,487
FTEs		18		18
World Literature	\$	417	\$	371
FTEs		3		2
Teacher Training	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		1
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,385	\$	5,092
Total Program Service FTEs		25		25
% of Total \$		88.5%		84.9%
% of Total FTEs		92.6%		92.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	699	\$	904
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		699		904
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		11.5%		15.1%
% of Total FTEs		7.4%		7.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,084	\$	5,996
TOTAL FTEs		27		27
NET INCOME/(EXPENSE)	\$	355	\$	675

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

Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,382	-	-	-	1,382
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities			-		-
Receivables & Advances	629	-	-	481	1,110
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	29	-	-	-	29
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	280	-	-	63	343
Equities	1,395	7,965	60	-	9,420
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	43	-	-	-	43
PP & E	15	-	-	-	15
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3,773</b>	<b>7,965</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>12,342</b>
Accounts Payable	387	-	-	-	387
Notes/Loans Payable	44	-	-	-	44
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	309	-	-	-	309
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>740</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 3,033</b>	<b>7,965</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>11,602</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Other: \$6,608	Hawaii: \$1,357			
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: \$60				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Short term Loan: \$481	NA Trn: \$48		Trust: \$15	

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

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	5,472	\$	4,986
% of Total Income		67.6%		60.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,582	\$	1,531
Estate Gifts	\$	245	\$	211
Total Gift Income		1,827		1,742
% of Total Income		22.6%		21.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	70
Miscellaneous	\$	791	\$	1,508
Total Other Income		791		1,578
% of Total Income		9.8%		19.0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>8,090</b>		<b>8,306</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
New-Church Development	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Established & Small Churches	\$	377	\$	367
FTEs		2		2
Campus/schools	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Ministry Teams	\$	5,194	\$	5,322
FTEs		35		35
Ministry Devel & Planning	\$	1,264	\$	1,321
FTEs		11		8
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,835	\$	7,010
Total Program Service FTEs		48		45
% of Total \$		80.4%		79.9%
% of Total FTEs		84.2%		83.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	866	\$	920
FTEs		3		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	802	\$	839
FTEs		6		7
Total Support Service \$		1,668		1,759
Total Support Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total \$		19.6%		20.1%
% of Total FTEs		15.8%		16.7%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,503</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,769</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>54</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(413)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(463)</b>

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

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 3,088	-	-	-	3,088
CDs, Time Deposits	2,000	-	-	-	2,000
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	25,977	-	-	-	25,977
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	25	-	-	-	25
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>31,090</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>31,090</b>
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	25,788	-	-	-	25,788
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>25,788</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,788</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,302</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,302</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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 05-06 Actual	Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>			
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	\$	1,220	\$ 1,584
Total Other Income		1,220	1,584
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>1,220</b>	<b>1,584</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
Loan Interest	\$	694	\$ 1,030
FTEs		1	1
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	694	\$ 1,030
Total Program Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		78.5%	83.3%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%	50.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	190	\$ 207
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		190	207
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		21.5%	16.7%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%	50.0%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>\$ 1,237</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>\$ 347</b>



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

	-----December 31, 2007-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 1,498	204	-	-	1,702
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	406	2	-	-	408
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	7,703	-	-	-	7,703
Equities	23,758	-	-	-	23,758
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>33,365</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33,571</b>
Accounts Payable	279	-	-	-	279
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 33,086</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33,292</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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 2006 Actual		MPF 2007 Actual		SAF 2006 Actual		SAF 2007 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	37	\$	39
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		86.0%		84.8%
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	\$	1,804	\$	1,911	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	250	\$	250	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	3,409	\$	1,646	\$	6	\$	7
Total Other Income		5,463		3,807		6		7
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		14.0%		15.2%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>		<b>5,463</b>		<b>3,807</b>		<b>43</b>		<b>46</b>
<b>DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):</b>								
Program Services:								
Distributions	\$	1,961	\$	2,061	\$	3	\$	17
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,961	\$	2,061	\$	3	\$	17
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		84.6%		82.5%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				
Support Services:								
Management & General	\$	356	\$	436	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		356		436		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		15.4%		17.5%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				
<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,317</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,497</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>-</b>
<b>NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,146</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,310</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>29</b>

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

	-----December 31, 2007-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 3,061	210	-	-	3,271
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	457	1	-	-	458
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	20,966	-	-	-	20,966
Equities	85,673	-	-	-	85,673
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>110,157</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>110,368</b>
Accounts Payable	229	7	-	-	236
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 109,928</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>110,132</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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 2006 Actual	MPF 2007 Actual	SAF 2006 Actual	SAF 2007 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 94	\$ 91
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	92.2%	91.0%
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	\$ 4,297	\$ 4,554	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 11,821	\$ 5,877	\$ 8	\$ 9
Total Other Income	16,118	10,431	8	9
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	7.8%	9.0%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>	<b>16,118</b>	<b>10,431</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 6,650	\$ 6,894	\$ 47	\$ 81
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 6,650	\$ 6,894	\$ 47	\$ 81
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	87.4%	88.4%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 958	\$ 902	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	958	902	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	12.6%	11.6%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$ 7,608</b>	<b>\$ 7,796</b>	<b>\$ 47</b>	<b>\$ 81</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NET ADDITIONS/(DEDUCTIONS)</b>	<b>\$ 8,510</b>	<b>\$ 2,635</b>	<b>\$ 55</b>	<b>\$ 19</b>

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

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

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	2,229	\$	2,744
% of Total Income		87.4%		86.9%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	282	\$	336
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		282		336
% of Total Income		11.1%		10.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	38	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	-	\$	79
Total Other Income		38		79
% of Total Income		1.5%		2.5%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>2,549</b>		<b>3,159</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	198	\$	192
FTEs		2		1
Race Relations	\$	274	\$	338
FTEs		4		3
Pastor-Church Relations	\$	515	\$	525
FTEs		3		3
Abuse Prevention	\$	159	\$	167
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	230	\$	236
FTEs		1		1
Social & Restorative Justice		289		319
FTEs		3		4
Sust. Pastoral & Church Excel.		449		497
FTEs		1		2
Ministries in Canada	\$	613	\$	672
FTEs		4		4
Total Program Service \$	\$	2,727	\$	2,946
Total Program Service FTEs		19		19
% of Total \$		97.1%		95.2%
% of Total FTEs		95.0%		95.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	47	\$	52
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	35	\$	95
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		82		147
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		2.9%		4.8%
% of Total FTEs		5.0%		5.0%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,809</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,093</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>20</b>		<b>20</b>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(260)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>66</b>

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

	June 30, 2007				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,242	827	312	-	3,381
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	760	11	1	-	772
Inventory	44	-	-	-	44
Prepays & Advances	51	-	-	-	51
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	103	1,054	60	450	1,667
Equities	103	1,054	61	537	1,755
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	560	-	-	-	560
Other	20	-	-	-	20
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3,883</b>	<b>2,946</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>8,250</b>
Accounts Payable	971	153	-	-	1,124
Notes/Loans Payable	451	-	-	-	451
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	241	-	-	-	241
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,330	-	-	-	1,330
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,993</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,146</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 890</b>	<b>2,793</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>5,104</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Resettlement Fund \$1,400 - Legacy Fund \$599 - Insurance Fund \$76 - Endowment/Annuities \$155 - Japan Note \$475				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted gifts, missionary support and program support.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments.				

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

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	5,135	\$	4,997
% of Total Income		40.6%		38.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	6,449	\$	6,793
Estate Gifts	\$	400	\$	374
Total Gift Income		6,849		7,167
% of Total Income		54.1%		55.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	678	\$	873
Total Other Income		678		873
% of Total Income		5.4%		6.7%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>12,662</b>		<b>13,037</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,519	\$	3,483
FTEs		33		33
Eurasia	\$	2,407	\$	2,056
FTEs		21		21
Latin America	\$	3,630	\$	4,016
FTEs		28		28
Europe	\$	774	\$	812
FTEs		8		8
Education	\$	562	\$	681
FTEs		7		7
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	10,892	\$	11,048
Total Program Service FTEs		96		97
% of Total \$		86.2%		83.5%
% of Total FTEs		87.6%		88.2%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	857	\$	1,035
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	892	\$	1,146
FTEs		8		8
Total Support Service \$		1,749		2,181
Total Support Service FTEs		14		13
% of Total \$		13.8%		16.5%
% of Total FTEs		12.4%		11.8%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	\$	<b>12,641</b>	\$	<b>13,229</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>110</b>		<b>110</b>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENSE)</b>	\$	<b>21</b>	\$	<b>(192)</b>



**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee**  
**Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2007				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,308	\$ 3,053	\$ 3,568	\$ -	8,929
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	983	268	1,447	-	2,698
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	76	-	-	-	76
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	20	-	20
Equities	-	2,454	820	23	3,297
Partnerships	335	-	-	-	335
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	541	-	121	-	662
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>4,243</b>	<b>5,775</b>	<b>5,976</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16,017</b>
Accounts Payable	1,340	-	-	-	1,340
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	340	-	-	-	340
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,680</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,680</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,563</b>	<b>5,775</b>	<b>5,976</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14,337</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments as stipulated by board = \$2,803 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$2,970 9/11 funds = \$2				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$121      Purpose-restricted gifts = \$5,534 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$321				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23				

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

		Fiscal 05-06 Actual		Fiscal 06-07 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	18,878	\$	14,276
Estate Gifts	\$	1,039	\$	1,077
Total Gift Income		19,917		15,353
% of Total Income		63.7%		58.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	9,572	\$	8,781
Miscellaneous	\$	1,762	\$	1,996
Total Other Income		11,334		10,777
% of Total Income		36.3%		41.2%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>31,251</b>		<b>26,130</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	10,290	\$	11,217
FTEs		56		53
No. America programs	\$	1,382	\$	1,625
FTEs		6		6
Disaster relief programs	\$	11,997	\$	12,846
FTEs		9		13
Above-budget relief costs				
FTEs				
Education	\$	637	\$	652
FTEs		3		5
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	24,306	\$	26,340
Total Program Service FTEs		74		77
% of Total \$		89.9%		88.0%
% of Total FTEs		79.6%		74.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,385	\$	2,051
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,341	\$	1,529
FTEs		12		19
Total Support Service \$		2,726		3,580
Total Support Service FTEs		19		26
% of Total \$		10.1%		12.0%
% of Total FTEs		20.4%		25.2%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>27,032</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>29,920</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>93</b>		<b>103</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>4,219</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(3,790)</b>

# REPORT 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 name of the agency or educational institution. 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 are the story of how God is blessing our ministry through the agencies of the Christian Reformed 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.

Gerard L. Dykstra  
Executive Director  
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 Mr. Sybren Vander Zwaag, president; Rev. Mark Van Haitisma, vice president; Ms. Rose Olthuis, secretary; and Mr. Harry Boessenkool, treasurer.

#### C. Board member nominees

The following nominees for board membership are being presented to the classes in the various regions for a vote:

#### *Region 2*

*Rev. Gerrit Bomhof* is pastor of First CRC in Red Deer, Alberta. He has served as a classical stated clerk and on various classical committees. His denominational service includes membership on the Board of Home Missions. Rev. Bomhof has taught in Belarus with Campus Crusade for Christ, and has worked in the Dominican Republic with World Wide Christian Schools.

*Rev. John Van Sloten* planted, and is presently pastoring, New Hope CRC in Calgary, Alberta. He serves as the chair of the classical Home Missions committee. Rev. Van Sloten has provided leadership to his congregation in web outreach. He has also been active in media work, writing editorials for the local newspaper, and contributing to web-based media outlets.

#### *Region 5*

The board of The Back to God Hour has made a diligent effort to bring a double nomination to the classes for Region 5. In spite of those efforts, the board was able to bring a single nomination to the region, and asks for approval of the following nominee:

*Mr. Stanley Vander Pol* is a member of Tacoma CRC in Tacoma, Washington, and is president of a regional trucking company in Washington State. Mr. Vander Pol has served his church as elder, and has provided leadership for a strategic planning initiative in his congregation. He has also served as a board member for several organizations, including Shoreline Christian School. Mr. Vander Pol served as a delegate to Synod 2006.

### Region 7

The board of The Back to God Hour has made a diligent effort to bring a double nomination to the classes for Region 7. In spite of those efforts, the board was able to bring a single nomination to the region, and asks for approval of the following nominee:

*Rev. Bobby Boyd* serves as the pastor of Church Rock CRC in Church Rock, New Mexico. He has served twelve years as a delegate to the board of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and is presently a board member for the Red Mesa Foundation.

#### *At-large member*

*Ms. Karyl Groeneveld* is a member of Olympia CRC, Olympia, Washington, and has taught Bible at Eastern Christian High School (Midland Park, New Jersey). She has also taught in various congregational settings. Ms. Groeneveld serves as a regional mission mobilizer for Christian Reformed World Missions and has been serving her church as a choir director and in worship planning.

#### *D. Salary disclosure*

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd

### **III. The Back to God Hour ministries**

During the past year, The Back to God Hour has continued to fulfill its mission to harness the power of media to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a ministry that reaches around the world, The Back to God Hour has brought the good news of Christ to both the great cities of the world and to rural, isolated areas where the gospel is heard only through media witness. The gospel has been proclaimed via radio, television, print, the Internet, and telephone messaging. Response has flowed to The Back to God Hour through phone, mail, email, and in personal contact; by visiting a Back to God Hour follow-up center; or through a local church identified with The Back to God Hour. The Back to God Hour staff and trained volunteers have offered spiritual guidance and prayer, referred people to Christian counselors, and helped seekers find church homes. 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 new opportunities and delivery systems for the gospel. Among exciting developments this year has been the groundbreaking for a new media center in Brazil to house the Portuguese- and Spanish-language ministries. This ministry center, which will have the potential to serve other languages as well, is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2009. The new facility will significantly increase the impact that The Back to God Hour and its ministry partners can make throughout Latin America.

#### *A. Arabic-language ministry*

The Back to God Hour maintains a cooperative ministry with Words of Hope (the media ministry of the 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. Recently the ministry partnership significantly increased the number of hours broadcast each week to Arabic listeners throughout the Middle East. A new text-messaging system now allows listeners to contact the ministry quickly and confidentially. An expanding website provides both podcasts and additional discipleship materials. Our partnership with MERF allows The Back to God Hour to pursue broadcasting in the context of holistic mission. In addition to broadcasting, MERF also trains church leaders, supports church plants, and provides relief support. The broadcast ministry leader in Arabic is Rev. Victor Atallah.

#### *B. English-language ministry*

1. English-language ministry continues to explore and develop ways to reach broad audiences for Christ—both in North America and around the world.
2. The weekly half-hour radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, proclaims the historic Christian faith throughout the globe. This program is heard on more than one hundred North American stations, on nineteen major stations in metropolitan areas in Nigeria, and on worldwide shortwave radio. It is also podcast through The Back to God Hour website. A follow-up center in Nigeria operates in concert with World Missions personnel and indigenous church leadership.
3. Recently The Back to God Hour premiered *Walk the Way*. This daily one-minute radio program offers a brief story or point to consider and directs listeners to the *Walk the Way* website, where additional Christian resources are available. *Walk the Way* is meant to engage younger adults in thinking through the implications and claims of the gospel of Christ.
4. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of 425,000 copies of each issue of *TODAY* (a bimonthly devotional). Both sermon messages and the *TODAY* devotions are available on The Back to God Hour website and by email subscription. An additional 45,000 copies of *TODAY* are distributed in Nigeria.
5. *Kids Corner* radio program is now heard on over 500 stations in North America, including the Moody Radio Network. *Kids Corner* is presently updating its website to make it more engaging and effective. At [www.kids-corner.org](http://www.kids-corner.org), children can listen to the programs, and request music CDs, bookmarks, and other fun activities. There is also a section on the website to help parents become spiritual mentors to their children. *Kids Corner* is a partner with HisKids.net, an alliance of Christian children's radio programs. HisKids.net webcasts *Kids Corner* and is helping to raise awareness of the program among our potential audience.
6. The Back to God Hour continues to partner with FEBA (a Christian media ministry headquartered in the United Kingdom) and Words of Hope in the production of *Spotlight*, a simplified English program that uses a limited vocabulary, basic grammar, and a slowed delivery rate to target an international audience of those who speak English as a second language.

The program is broadcast on sixty stations around the world. An increasing number of listeners are connecting to the program through the Spotlight website. English staff is exploring new ways to strengthen the awareness and impact of this important evangelistic tool.

7. The Back to God Hour is exploring ways to assist churches in using media to reach out to their communities. This past year The Back to God Hour has built staff capacity to meet this goal and has met with pastors to gain insight into effective strategies for use in churches. The Back to God Hour will be sharing more as this program develops.
8. Rev. Steven Koster provides leadership to the English ministry team.

#### *C. Chinese-language ministry*

1. Twenty-six provinces in China are home to over 1.3 billion people. Seven superpower stations located outside the country beam the gospel to China in Cantonese or Mandarin. The Back to God Hour staff in Hong Kong provides follow-up and listener contact for the sixteen programs produced each week.
2. Millions of Chinese speakers are immigrants to other countries. The Back to God Hour Chinese programs target these immigrant populations through broadcasting heard in major metropolitan areas in Australia, Canada, Central America, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, and the United States. In some of these areas, the programming is bilingual.
3. The Internet is proving to be an increasingly valuable tool in ministry to Chinese persons, as it can transcend geographical as well as political boundaries. A new children's website has been launched, with programming specifically targeted to Chinese children and their parents. Additional avenues of media distribution for the Chinese ministry include print, CDs, and DVDs.
4. Rev. Jimmy Lin gives direction to the Chinese ministry.

#### *D. French-language ministry*

The focus of the French-language ministry is on Africa and Haiti. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, gives leadership to this ministry. The French-language ministry continues to show amazing response rates, as evidenced by the 33,600 students enrolled in Bible study courses connected with this ministry. Joining Rev. Paul Mpindi in radio programming is his wife, Mrs. Charlotte Mpindi, who hosts a popular program devoted to a biblical perspective on women's issues pertinent to the African context. Several stadium events held in Congo this past year attracted 28,000 attendees, with thousands responding to a call to faith and discipleship. There is a developing partnership with churches in francophone Africa as The Back to God Hour ministry gains respect among church leaders for providing solid Bible teaching. Follow-up centers operate in Congo, Central African Republic, and Benin in Africa, and in Brussels, Belgium, which is home to a large African immigrant population. Future plans include a ministry center in Haiti to be operated in cooperation with Christian Reformed World Missions.

#### *E. Indonesian-language ministry*

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, and Christians there have experienced significant pressure because of their faith in Christ. In spite of these obstacles, the Indonesian ministry of The Back to God Hour is witnessing with boldness to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaja leads a team that produces a variety of radio programs, publishes four devotional booklets monthly (targeting different age groups), and maintains an active Internet ministry. Television is a growing part of the Indonesian ministry. The children's program, *Evergreen House*, has been well received, and together with the Chinese ministry we have begun to translate this program into Chinese. Efforts are now aimed at adult programming, which has proved more difficult to air in a Muslim culture. The ministry is testing to see whether a daily five-minute program will have greater acceptance than longer programs. The Indonesian ministry is working in close cooperation with the Indonesian Christian Church, an established denomination of 300,000 committed to the Reformed faith. In conjunction with the Indonesian Christian Church, the ministry is forming small "listening communities" in rural areas where its Sunday radio program is the main source of believers' spiritual nurture.

#### *F. Japanese-language ministry*

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the electronic media ministry in the Japanese language. During the past year, the ministry has shifted from shortwave to medium-wave broadcasting in order to be in step with changes in radio delivery within Japan. Highly advanced cell phone technology allows for a sophisticated text-message ministry, which is growing in popularity—doubling its impact from 9,000 to 18,000 subscriptions. The Japanese ministry also hosts an active website that offers users the opportunity to engage staff in chat room conversations. Regularly held events also allow listeners to meet for face-to-face encouragement and Bible instruction.

#### *G. Portuguese-language ministry*

Radio, television, telephone, and the Internet are important components of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. The office in Campinas is responsible not only for production and distribution of all the Portuguese-language programs but also for production of The Back to God Hour Spanish-language media programs. The new media center, which is in the process of construction, will significantly increase the impact of Latin American ministry and allow for work in other languages as well. In addition, the Portuguese ministry is exploring outreach in Africa to Portuguese-speaking countries. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil is a significant partner in this ministry, helping to fund television programs and providing support for a telephone ministry that reaches more than 300,000 persons each month.

#### *H. Russian-language ministry*

1. Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, Calvin Theological Seminary graduate and a native of Moscow, gives leadership to this ministry. Rev. Sosedkin, while stationed in North America, spends significant time in Russia, engaging in live radio broadcasting as well as personal contact with those who respond to this ministry.



2. The Russian staff of The Back to God Hour is located in both St. Petersburg and Moscow, with most follow-up work carried out in St. Petersburg in cooperation with Christian Reformed World Missions. Russian ministry has three primary delivery sources: radio broadcasting, Internet ministry, and collaborative work with Russian Christian periodicals. Shortwave broadcasting of Rev. Sosedkin's program covers all of Russia, with live call-in programs occurring weekly in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Internet site not only ministers to those within the country, but also is increasingly becoming a point of contact with Russian speakers around the world. Russian Christian periodicals are increasingly publishing articles from Back to God Hour staff and promoting Back to God Hour ministry.

*I. Spanish-language ministry*

1. Nearly 400 radio stations and 100 television stations carry The Back to God Hour Spanish-language programming. This ministry reaches Central, North, and South America as well as Spain. In addition, broadcasts within North America reach Spanish-speaking populations north of the Mexico border. Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership to the Spanish ministry.
2. The past year has seen the release of Rev. Serrano's book on homiletics, which has become a cornerstone to workshops held throughout Latin America. The workshops have encouraged a growing partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Mexico. In addition, media technology workshops conducted by the Spanish ministry, have strengthened partnerships with local radio and television stations.
3. Like Portuguese ministry, Spanish ministry will be strengthened through the construction of a new ministry center in Campinas, Brazil, scheduled for completion in the fall of 2009.

*J. Korean-language ministry*

The Back to God Hour has entered into partnership with the Korean Council of the Christian Reformed Church to produce bilingual *Today* devotions in both the Korean and English languages. The first edition of this new *Today* was released in January 2008. The initial printing of 7,000 will increase as distribution networks are established. The Korean-English *Today* will not only nurture Korean-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church, but will also be an effective evangelism tool in North America and beyond.

*K. Cooperative organizations*

1. The Back to God Hour cooperates with CRC World Missions in areas of joint ministry, including Japan, Russia, Mexico, Haiti, and Nigeria.
2. The Back to God Hour collaborates with the Korean Council of the Christian Reformed Church in the publication of a Korean-English *Today* devotional booklet.
3. The Back to God Hour contracts with Faith Alive Christian Resources and CRC Product Services for publication of selected materials.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. The Back to God Hour partners with Words of Hope (media ministry of the Reformed Church in America) and MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship) in media outreach to the Arab-speaking world, and in Spanish-language radio broadcasting of the Words of Hope devotions.
7. The Back to God Hour partners with Words of Hope and FEBA (a Christian radio ministry headquartered in the United Kingdom) to produce *Spotlight*, a simplified English ministry targeting an international audience.
8. The Back to God Hour is in partnership with HisKids.net, an alliance of Christian children's radio programs.
9. The Back to God Hour sustains major partnerships with Reformed denominations in Japan (Reformed Church in Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church).

#### **IV. Recommendations**

A. That Mr. Sybren Vander Zwaag, president; and Rev. Robert Heerspink, director of The Back to God Hour, be given the privilege of the floor when The Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect board members from the nominees presented for a three-year term.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance advisory committee.

The Back to God Hour  
Robert C. Heerspink, director

**I. Introduction**

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2007 and February 2008 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

For the October 2007 meeting, the thirty-one member Calvin Board of Trustees met October 18-20 at the Calvin College Prince Conference Center. The February meeting was held February 7-9, 2008, also at the Prince Conference Center.

Board officers elected for 2007-2008 are Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, chair; Mr. Stephen Chong, vice-chair; Ms. Cynthia A. Veenstra, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary; and Dr. Henry DeVries, vice president for administration, finance, and information services, treasurer.

**II. General college matters**

The October 2007 meeting was spent in the approval of appointments of the trustees to board committees for each division of the college, as well as for approval of the executive committee, and the membership of trustees on six college standing committees; one faculty interview was conducted, and the board, after a long discussion, voted to deny a request for an exception to the faculty church membership requirement. The February 2008 meeting was spent conducting faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure. Mrs. Beverly Weeks of the CRCNA Board of Trustees attended the meeting as an observer.

**III. Faculty***A. Faculty interviews*

Twenty faculty interviews were the highlight of the February 2008 meeting. Eleven were for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations) and nine for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

*B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching*

Dr. Judith Vander Woude, professor of speech and communication disorders, was presented the sixteenth 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 teaching and scholarship.

**IV. Election of college trustees***A. Regional trustees**Regions 1 and 2*

Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis is completing her first term as board trustee in 2008. The Trusteeship Committee recommends Dr. Oosterhuis for a second three-year term. The alternate position for Regions 1 and 2 is vacant.

### *Region 7*

The first three-year term for Dr. Mary Poel (incumbent) and Dr. Philip Kamps (alternate) expires in 2008. The Trusteeship Committee recommends that they be appointed to a second three-year term.

### *Region 9*

The second term for Mr. Craig Friesema (incumbent) and Dr. William De Rose (alternate) expires in 2008. The Trusteeship Committee has presented the following two nominees to the classes in the region for a vote, the results of which will be presented to Synod 2008 for ratification.

*Dr. William De Rose, B.A., Calvin College; M.D., Northwestern University; Internship and residency in internal medicine, University of Iowa Hospital; Captain, U.S. Army Medical Core.*

From 1970 until his retirement in 1996, Dr. De Rose was in an active practice of internal medicine and currently serves as honorary staff and instructor in physical diagnosis for the Department of Internal Medicine at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, Illinois. His board service includes the Chicago Southwest Christian School Association, and he served as a trustee and alternate trustee of Calvin College (four years as chair of the development committee). Dr. De Rose also served as co-chair for the Health and Wellness Committee of Calvin College, working to realign and improve medical services to students. He has served as an elder and currently is an active member of Hope CRC in Oak Forest, Illinois.

*Dr. Richard Vanden Berg, B.A., Calvin College; M.A., Chicago State University; D.E., Roosevelt University.*

Dr. Vanden Berg served in the Peace Corps and taught at Chicago Christian High School before serving at Thornton Fractional High School as a teacher for eleven years, and then as principal for seventeen years. He also worked part-time as an assistant professor of education at Trinity Christian College for one year. Dr. Vanden Berg currently serves as principal of Highland Christian School. He has been a member of the Munster CRC since 1970, where he has served as a Cadet leader, young people's leader, YCF Convention Committee member, and as deacon, elder, and choir member. He served as editor for the 125th anniversary book of Munster CRC, as well as for the centennial book for the city of Lansing, Illinois. His board service includes Lansing Christian School, various Christian Schools International committees, and the Lansing Lions Club.

### *Region 11*

The second three-year term for Mr. William Alphenaar, Jr. (incumbent) and Mr. Ralph Katerberg (alternate) expires in 2008. The Trusteeship Committee has presented the following two nominees to the classes in the region for a vote, the results of which will be presented to Synod 2008 for ratification.

*Rev. Dr. Randall D. Engle, B.A., Calvin College; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary; masters of theology in sacred music, Luther Seminary; Ph.D. in Philosophy, University of Wales.*

Rev. Engle served previously as pastor and music director at Calvary CRC in Bloomington, Minnesota, and currently serves as pastor of North Hills CRC in Troy, Michigan. He has had numerous articles published in

theological and worship journals including *The Banner*, *Reformed Worship*, and the *Complete Library of Christian Worship*. His board service includes president-elect of the Choristers Guild of America, chaplain, Southeast Michigan Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, the Calvin College Alumni Association Board, and Rev. Engle served as an alternate on the Calvin Board of Trustees. He is currently a CRC synodical deputy and a sought after conference speaker in the area of Calvinist Studies as well as on Liturgy and Church Music.

*Mr. Thomas J. Nobel, Jr.*, B.A. in accounting, Michigan State University; CPA, University of Michigan.

Mr. Nobel serves as president and CEO of Leisure Living Companies, a developer and manager of assisted living facilities for the elderly. His former and current board service includes president of Ada Christian School, treasurer of Grand Rapids Christian Schools, treasurer of Wedgewood Family Services and Foundation, president of the downtown Kiwanis, chair of Kent County Community Mental Health, national director for the Institute of Management in Accounting, and chair of Kent County Community Mental Health. Mr. Nobel is a member of the classical ministry team and serves as treasurer for Classis Thornapple Valley. He is a member of Ada CRC where he serves as chair of the deacons. He has also served as an elder and chaired two pastoral search committees.

#### *Region 12*

The second three-year term for Rev. Douglas Bratt (incumbent) and Mr. Donald Sporn (alternate) expires in 2008. The Trusteeship Committee has presented the following two nominees to the classes in the region for a vote, the results of which will be presented to Synod 2008.

*Mr. Max William Vreugdenhill*, B.A. in English, Calvin College.

Mr. Vreugdenhill is the president and owner of AM Building Industries Inc., based in Bradenton, Florida. He served on the Calvin Alumni Association Board and on the CRC Board of Publications. His community service includes vice president for the Manatee County Coin Club (with previous service as secretary and president). Mr. Vreugdenhill is currently in his second term on the Board of Directors from Manatee County Habitat for Humanity, and serves as its secretary. He has been on the Calvin Florida Gulf Coast Alumni Chapter for over fifteen years, and he and his wife, Marilyn, are known for their gracious hospitality to Calvin speakers and guests. Mr. Vreugdenhill serves the Calvin Alumni Chapter as treasurer and as scholarship coordinator, and represents Calvin at area college fairs. He is a member of Bradenton CRC where he has served numerous terms as deacon, treasurer, and chair of council. He currently serves as an elder and chair of council.

*Dr. Jack R. Van Der Slik*, B.A., Calvin College; M.A.E., Western Michigan University; M.A. and Ph.D., Michigan State University.

Dr. Van Der Slik has taught in numerous academic institutions over his career including the University of Illinois, Covenant College, Trinity Christian College (where he served as academic dean), Southern Illinois University (associate dean), and, in his early teaching years, at Bellflower and Denver Christian Schools. He has edited or authored several books and published in several journals on American politics, business, and government. Dr. Van

Der Slik has taught numerous adult education classes and has served in leadership roles in the congregations he has been part of. He currently is a member of Sunlight Community CRC in Port St. Lucie, Florida, where he and his wife have lived since retirement. At Sunlight Community Church he serves as clerk of the elders and of council and also serves as chair of the board for Sunlight Christian Academy.

*B. Alumni trustee*

Alumni Trustee Ronald Baylor completes his first term in 2008 and is eligible for a second term. The Trusteeship Committee recommends him for a second term.

*C. At-large trustees*

The second terms for Janice Van Dyke-Zeilstra and Mr. David Vander Ploeg expire in 2008. The Trusteeship Committee recommends them for a third term and submits their names for ratification at Synod 2008.

The first term for Michelle Van Dyke will expire in 2008. The board recommends her for a second term and submits her name for ratification.

## **V. Finance**

The board approved the 2008-2009 budget of approximately \$98.6 million. Tuition and fees were set at \$23,165, room and board at \$7,970, respectively. This represents a 6.9 percent increase in tuition and room and board rates from the current year. In keeping with college practice, financial aid will also increase at a somewhat greater rate than the costs.

## **VI. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, and the president of the college, Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, when matters pertaining to education are presented.

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

1. Bruce R. Berglund, Ph.D., *professor* of history
2. Keith A. Grasman, Ph.D., *professor* of biology
3. Loren D. Haarsma, Ph.D., *associate professor* of physics and astronomy (shared appointment)
4. Stephen F. Matheson, Ph.D., *associate professor* of biology
5. Diane B. Obenchain, Ph.D., *professor* of religion
6. Bertus F. Polman, Ph.D., *professor* of music
7. Donald J. Reynolds, D.B.A., *associate professor* of business and accounting
8. Thomas L. Scofield, Ph.D., *associate professor* of mathematics and statistics
9. Cynthia G. Slagter, Ph.D., *associate professor* of Spanish
10. James M. Turner, Ph.D., *associate professor* of mathematics and statistics
11. Jo-Ann Van Reeuwijk, M.A., *associate professor* of art

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot reelect members for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the results of the elections for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin College Board of Trustees  
Cynthia A. Veenstra, secretary

The seminary board of trustees presents their report to Synod 2008 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 2008.

The board officers are Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, chair; Dr. Henk Van Andel, vice-chair; and Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary.

The board recommends that synod approve the following seminary trustees who have completed one term of service and are eligible for reappointment: Dr. Henk Van Andel (Region 2), Rev. James R. Poelman (Region 4), and Rev. Richard J. Hamstra (Region 10).

The board, at its February meeting, voted not to fill the vacant alternate positions and, in subsequent openings for regional delegates, present nominees for delegates only and to phase out appointments to the alternate position.

The board recommends that synod appoint Rev. Andrew K. Chun to serve as the representative from Region 12. Rev. Chun is completing the term of a former trustee and has served on the board for less than two years. The board recommends that he be appointed to a term of three years.

The following slate of nominees was submitted to classes in Region 11 for voting in the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2008.

#### *Region 11*

*Rev. Paul R. De Vries* serves as pastor at Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He received a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and was ordained into the ministry of the Word in 1989.

*Rev. Christopher B. Lanham* is the pastor of Cascades Fellowship CRC in Jackson, Michigan. He received his master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and was ordained into the ministry of the Word in 2001.

### II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., as president, Rev. Duane K. Kelderman as vice president for administration, and Dr. Henry De Moor as vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra serves as the director of the Ph.D. program; Rev. Donald E. Byker as the director of ministry formation; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; and Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student advisor.

This year, the board reappointed Dr. Duane K. Kelderman to the position of vice president for administration for an indefinite length of time subject to ratification by Synod 2008. The seminary is grateful for his commitment and service to the seminary and church at large.



### 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 people who contribute so much to the health and welfare of our denomination.

The board dealt with the reappointment of several faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2008:

Mariano Avila, professor of Old Testament with tenure

Darwin K. Glassford, associate professor of Christian education for two years

David M. Rylaarsdam, professor of historical theology with tenure

Pieter C. Tuit, associate professor of missiology for two years

The board recommends the appointment of Dr. Mary Lynn Vanden Berg (contingent upon a successful interview) as assistant professor of systematic theology for three year, effective July 1, 2008.

The board approved a number of part-time teaching arrangements for the 2008-2009 academic year.

### IV. Program highlights

The seminary has received a gift of over \$2 million—and it's all for students. The Ministry Incentive Program is a revolving student loan program with a generous 50 percent loan forgiveness benefit for people who serve the CRC in ordained ministry. The seminary is delighted with the positive financial impact this gift has on the lives of current students and the further financial advantage this gift offers future students who choose to attend Calvin Theological Seminary.

The M.Div. program has been reduced by 19 credit hours. The M.Div. degree is now a true three-year degree. A Culture, Pedagogy, and Curriculum Committee has begun a two-year renewal project which will lead to additional changes and renewal in the seminary's educational program.

Though no longer required, year-long internships are being strongly encouraged and supported. Many students are already planning to do a year-long internship. The seminary is delighted at the revival of interest by churches and students in these internships. Please contact Rev. Donald E. Byker ([dbyker@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:dbyker@calvinseminary.edu)) if you might be interested in sponsoring a year-long internship in your congregation or ministry.

In order to prepare future CRC pastors and other ministry leaders, the seminary desires to know the names of people who are considering vocational ministry or who, in the estimation of local pastors and other church leaders, have gifts for ministry and should be considering vocational ministry. Please send an email to our director of admissions, Mr. Greg Janke ([gjanke0@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:gjanke0@calvinseminary.edu)), with such names. Trust us to be very sensitive in how we communicate with such persons. The more information you

give us, the more sensitively we are able to try to build bridges to potential seminarians.

The Calvin Theological Seminary and the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) websites continue to offer pastors and other church leaders excellent online resources for pastors wherever they are. The number of people who listen to lectures and sermons continues to increase. These and many other ministry resources are available at [www.calvinseminary.edu](http://www.calvinseminary.edu).

## **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: 177

Non-Christian Reformed students: 128

International (does not include Canadian students): 68

Programs:

M.Div.: 149

M.A.: 36

M.T.S.: 15

Th.M.: 49

Ph.D.: 37

\* EPMC: 13

Unclassified: 8

Male students: 256

Female students: 49

\* Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

## **VI. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, chair; and Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the reelection of trustees from the slate of nominees presented.

C. That synod ratify the following reappointment of an administrator with faculty status:

Dr. Duane K. Kelderman, vice president for administration for an indefinite period of time

D. That synod approve the following faculty reappointments:

Mariano Avila, professor of Old Testament with tenure

Darwin K. Glassford, associate professor of educational ministry for two years

David M. Rylaarsdam, professor of historical theology with tenure

Pieter C. Tuit, associate professor of missiology for two years

E. That synod ratify the appointment of Dr. Mary Lynn Vanden Berg as assistant professor of systematic theology for three years, effective July 1, 2008.

F. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the International Student Subsidy Fund and the Facing Your Future program).

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

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

## **Appendix**

### **Curriculum Vitae: Mary Lynn Vanden Berg**

#### **Education**

Ph.D. (2008) Calvin Theological Seminary  
M.Div. (2002) Calvin Theological Seminary  
B.A. (1981) Calvin College

#### **Professional/pastoral experience**

Professor, Western Theological Seminary	Winter 2007
Professor, Kuyper College	Winter 2007
Professor, Calvin Theological Seminary	Fall 2006, 2007
Professor of Record, Poetry and Prophets: New Church Development. Joint online course with Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper College	Winter 2005
Teaching assistant, Calvin Theological Seminary	Spring 2005, Fall 2005
Teaching assistant, Calvin Theological Seminary	Fall 2004, Winter 2004
Professor, Cornerstone University	Fall 2002 – Spring 2003
Teaching assistant, Reformed Bible College	2000 – 2002

#### **Publications**

“Redemptive Suffering . . . Christ’s Alone.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* (refereed article forthcoming)

*Stewardship: Keeping Faith with God’s Gifts*. Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 2000

#### **Scholarships and awards**

Full Tuition Scholarship, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2006-2007  
Institutional Assistantship, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2005-2006  
Institutional Assistantship, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2004-2005  
Full Tuition Scholarship, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2003-2004  
Kathleen Pietras Scholarship, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2001-2002

### I. Introduction

#### A. *Our mission*

Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ's mission.

What does this statement mean? How *will* Home Missions lead, challenge, and inspire the Christian Reformed Church in light of the seemingly insurmountable challenges of the modern world?

The answer—we have hope! The writer of Hebrews describes this hope as “an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf” (Hebrews 6:19-20). This is the same hope God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—an anchor of the soul—sure and steadfast.

Our hopeful anticipation of the future is anchored in God's love—through the gift of his only son—Jesus Christ. That is an extraordinary gift indeed!

#### B. *Our mandate*

Synod has mandated Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) “to lead the church in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church.” The mandate is expressed in these three mission activities:

- a. Encourage and assist churches and classes in their work of evangelism.
- b. Initiate, support, and guide new-church development in cooperation with local churches and classes.
- c. Initiate, support, and guide other evangelistic ministries (i.e., campus ministry and Christian-schools ministry in New Mexico) with local churches and classes.

(Home Missions Order, Art. 2, 1992)

#### C. *Following Christ. In Mission Together. Home Missions' goal and ministries*

Home Missions pursues its mandate under the leading CRC ministry objective: “transforming lives and communities worldwide” by “creating and sustaining healthy churches.” (See Chapter V, the 2008-2009 Ministry Plan Scorecard Budget Report.)

*Goals* – CRHM creates and supports regional teams and partnerships that pray for, equip, and multiply believers, new churches, mission-focused churches, and educational ministries. CRHM also develops resources that strengthen local ministries and their leaders.

*Ministries* – The ministries of CRHM include prayer, planning, training, budgeting, communication, enlisting ministry partners, and fundraising to fulfill CRHM's threefold mandate from synod—

- New church development.
- Mission-focused church development.
- Educational ministries.

—and two supportive strategies:

- Missional leadership development.
- Prayer and small group development.

These ministries flow from Home Missions' core ministry values:

- *God's Mission.* God's redeeming love for his world and his people inspires us to participate in his mission.
- *Prayer.* Persistent prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission.
- *Community.* Congregations and other mission-focused communities are the primary agents of God's harvest in North America.
- *Leadership.* Raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God's people for God's work.
- *Disciple-making.* The call of the Word and Spirit to make disciples demands our eager response.
- *Reconciliation.* Working for diversity, justice, and unity in Christ is critical to our witness in North America.
- *Stewardship.* God provides abundant resources for his work as his people step out in faith and witness.
- *Team.* God gives gifts to each of us for the good of all.

#### *D. Home Missions organization*

Rev. John Rozeboom, director of Home Missions, leads the agency and reports to the CRC director of denominational ministries, Ms. Sandy Johnson, as well as to the Home Missions board. Rev. Rozeboom plans to retire in November 2008.

Home Missions' six-person ministry advancement team, led by Mr. Tom Bratt, leads Home Missions' fundraising and communications efforts.

The Grand Rapids-based ministry team, led by Rev. Allen Likkel, supports Home Missions' regional ministry teams throughout Canada and the United States. This three-person team administers all Home Missions' grants. Home Missions regional leaders (formerly intercultural directors and regional directors) are also part of the ministry team.

In 2005, regional teams were formed and are working in all twelve regions of the CRC. Led by Home Missions regional leaders and funded by both Home Missions and classes, these teams integrate regional Home Missions staff with local and classis leaders to cast mission vision and set goals; to support church planting, local church mission, and campus outreach; and to make budget allocation recommendations for new and continuing partnership grants. Regional ministry teams also have the responsibility to advance Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic ministries.

The regional teams and team leaders are

Black and Urban, Rev. Bob Price	Korean and California South, Rev. Tong Park
Chicagoland, Rev. Peter Kelder	Native American and Red Mesa,
Eastern Canada, Mr. Ben Vandezande	Rev. Stanley Jim
Eastern USA, Mr. Drew Angus	North Central USA, Rev. Larry Meyer
Great Lakes, Rev. Ben Becksvort	West Central USA, Rev. Jerry Holleman
Hispanic and Southeast USA,	West Coast, Rev. Peter Holwerda
Mr. Javier Torres and Rev. Stan Workman	Western Canada, Rev. Martin Contant

#### *E. CRC evangelizing growth in 2008*

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,293 persons through evangelism in 2007, compared to 3,287 persons in 2006, 3,373 persons in 2005, and 3,374 persons in 2004.

The reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church totals 268,052 (*Yearbook 2008*, p. 145), compared to 269,856 last year, despite the fact that member additions (10,858 persons) were 4,400 more persons than reported member decline (6,458 persons). Factors other than members added or lost also impact the total membership number. For example, not all congregations report their membership numbers.

## **II. Home Missions board and executive committee**

### **A. Board membership**

The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod to guide and carry 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 board members-at-large will balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy/nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees.

The following slate of nominees from Region 3 was submitted to the classes for vote and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a three-year term:

*Mr. David Harlow* is a member of Hope Fellowship CRC in Courtice, Ontario. He currently runs his own management business and has worked as executive director of Hostel Services. Mr. Harlow has served as a missionary in Grenada, a ministry coordinator at a local CRC, and manager of a real estate office, and he currently serves classis as treasurer and as outreach liaison between the classical ministry committee and the outreach ministries of classis.

*Ms. Jane Porter*, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, is a member of All Nations CRC where she is currently serving on church council as an elder. She has served as a deacon, chair of the deacons, director of adult education, chair of the education committee, and plans and leads worship at her church. Recipients of two Institute for Christian Worship grants, she and her husband, Doug, work to enrich worship. Ms. Porter is studying for a license to preach in her congregation. Her first connection with the CRC was through her involvement with Anathoth Housing Co-operative, a housing project initiated and built by All Nations. Life in the co-op soon led to the Northend Mission, a Home Missions sponsored storefront church situated in inner city Halifax. Ms. Porter and her husband still work toward values of a shared community life in an urban setting by opening their home to student boarders and promoting hospitality through shared meals and study groups. Ms. Porter grew up in Toronto, Ontario, and became a Christian as a teenager while attending Young Life. As a young adult, she participated in Creation 2, a Christian theatre company. She currently works as a sound recordist in the film industry.

The following slate of nominees from Region 10 was submitted to the classes for vote, and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a three-year term:

*Rev. Larry Baar* is currently pastor of New Era CRC in New Era, Michigan. He has served on the Board of Publications, as synod delegate (five times), and as chair of the County Minister's Association. He has also

worked on the Suicide Prevention Project for Oceana County. Rev. Baar currently serves as chairman of Classis Muskegon ministry board, which oversees classis diaconal ministry and new church starts and is a member of the Oceana County Food and Shelter Board, which oversees FEMA funding for homeless people and local food pantries. He has been chairman of the classical ministries board for several years.

*Rev. Paul Bakker* is currently pastor of First CRC in Zeeland, Michigan. He is a member of the Classis Zeeland Home Missions team and the Great Lakes regional partner team. He serves as Christian Reformed Home Missions board alternate and as Crossroads Community Church (church plant) steering team chair. Rev. Bakker previously served at West Park CRC in Cleveland, Ohio.

#### B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Dr. Mary Buteyn, president; Rev. Phil Reinders, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (director); Ms. Beth Fylstra, recording secretary; Mr. Rodney Huguen, treasurer; and Rev. Samuel Cooper, vice all.

The officers of the Canada board for 2007-2008 are Rev. Phil Reinders, president; Rev. Samuel Cooper, vice president; Mr. Victor Chen, secretary; and Mr. Michael Talsma, treasurer.

#### 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

### III. Ministry development

#### A. Mission-focused (established) churches

Imagine the mission impact of Christian Reformed congregations who understand that God's primary means for accomplishing his mission on earth is through his grace that flows through his people. Home Missions is moving into a new chapter of ministry with congregations, and it is our goal to encourage congregations to view themselves as mission-focused churches that celebrate the outpouring of God's grace through their daily ministries.

The twelve regional ministry teams are widely involved in mission-focused church and leader support through partnerships in which Home Missions provides

- grants to forty-four churches for program assistance and outreach.
- grants to two Heritage churches.
- partnership staffing grants.
- encouragement to pastors through workshops and consultation.
- leadership to congregations as they discern God's leading for the future.
- support for classical leadership groups.

(See also section IV, Regional ministry teams and partnership grants overview.)



## B. Church planting and development

In its simplest form, Christian Reformed Home Missions' church-planting strategy calls for churches to plant churches. Church planting is the best strategy for reaping the greatest harvest. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands us to "make disciples of all nations."

While the membership of the CRC is diversifying, there is a deep sense of unity around the gospel and a desire to plant culturally relevant new churches that are both biblical and Reformed.

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 start 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' synodical mandate).

### 1. Key church-planting strategies

Home Missions assists church planting through the following 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 reinforces 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, and support)
- bootcamp (an intensive planning and training week)
- orientation (3.5 days at the CRC Grand Rapids offices)

As the new churches develop, various denominational helps are available. Home Missions' services include

- *Navigating the Growth Matrix* (church planting video)
- Small group training and consultation
- Peer church planter learning forums
- Population migration and immigration trends research

Home Missions thanks God for the church planters and their families who have answered God's call to plant new churches. The following table shows church planting results for 2007-2008 as of January 7, 2008:



## Church Planting/Development

Churches reporting	62
Main worship attendance	4,045
Total confessing members	3,519
Growth by evangelism	387

Cultural diversity of church planting ministry is shown below:

### Home Missions grant-funded ministry leaders – 1988 through 2007

	European-American	Ethnic Minority	Total	% Ethnic Minority
1988-2001 (13 years)	95	115	210	55%
2002-2003 (2 years)	27	26	53	49%
2004-2005 (2 years)	16	19	35	54%
2006 (1 year)	7	13	20	65%
2007 (1 year)	13	5	18	28%
Total	145	173	318	54%

### New churches – 1988 through 2007

	European-American	Ethnic Minority	Total	% Ethnic Minority
1988-2001 (13 years)	99	134	233	58%
2002-2003 (2 years)	16	16	32	50%
2004-2005 (2 years)	18	17	35	49%
2006 (1 year)	8	12	20	60%
2007 (1 year)	10	11	21	53%
Total	151	190	341	56%

#### c. Financial partnering for church planting

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.

The CRC goal of increasing our capacity to plant twenty-five churches a year is in response to the potential harvest in North America. These new churches need 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 to offset the loss created by congregational merges, closures, and departures. From a kingdom perspective, adding twenty to thirty new churches annually would aid the massive challenge to reach the more than 200 million unchurched and under-churched people in Canada and the United States.

#### 2. New and continuing partnerships for ministry years 2007 through 2008

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 2008				
Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Allegan, MI/The River Staff	A	John Hutt	2007	2009
Allendale, MI/Friendship Chapel	A	Ron Hassell	2007	2009
Brookfield, WI/Connection Point	M	Eneyas Frietas	2007	2010
Brooklyn Park, WI/North Center Lao	L	Chanthala Sithavongsa	2007	2010
Dehli, CA/Church of the Cross	M	Zeke Nelson	2007	2009
Des Moines, IA/Des Moines CPD	A	Frank Ede	2007	2009
Edmonton, AB/Edmonton Resid.	A	Victor Ko	2007	2009
Grimsby, ON/Niagara CPD	A	Mike Collins	2007	2010
Grand Rapids, MI/Madison Sq. Satellite	M	Alton Hardy	2007	2009
Hialeah, FL/ICR Vida Nueva	H	Lourdes Granada	2007	2009
New York, NY/City Fellowship	A	Steve Wolma	2007	2010
New York, NY/New York City Resid.	A	Ben Spalink	2007	2008
Newport, ME/Pathway Community	A	Jeff Schmidt	2007	2009
Seattle, WA/Seattle Dream Church	K	Bomsu Kim	2007	2009
Seattle, WA/Seattle Urban Resid.	M	Ben Katt	2007	2010
St. John, IN/Pathway	A	Rob Knol	2007	2010
Winter Garden, FL/ Kissimmee Resid./CPD	H	Carlos Palacios	2007	2010
New work: Ministry year 2007				
Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Albuquerque, NM/Wings of Eagles	N	Paul Phillips	2006	2008
Bellingham, WA/Mosaic CPD/Resid.		Atkins & Hall	NFP	NFP
Canton, MI/Canton R&D	K	Lee Chul Jeong	2006	2008
Chino/Rowland Heights/Crosspoint	K	Sang Guen Lee	2006	2008
Columbia, SC/Crossroads	A	Cary Holbert	2007	2009
Edison, NJ/Global Vision	K	Eun Beom Kim	2006	2008
El Paso, TX/Sunshine Comm. Resid.	K	Tony Lara	2006	2008
Evergreen Park, IL/New Evergreen	A	John Wilczewski	2006	2008
Grand Rapids, MI/Gold Ave/Peace Hope	H	Gilbert Varela	NFP	NFP
Hamilton, ON/First Hamilton CPD	A	Tim Sheridan	2006	2008
Hooksett, NH/New Life Ministries	M	Ryan Bradley	2006	2008
Kelowna, BC/The Well	A	Ron VandenBrink	2006	2008
London, ON/N. London CPD	A	George Saylor	2006	2008
Muskegon, MI/On the House Church	A	Jeff Boersma	2006	2008
New York, NY/New York R&D/CPD	A	John Algera	2006	2008
New York, NY/New York Residency	A	Steve Wolma	2006	2008
Olathe, KS/Pathway Community 2nd Staff	A	Kurt Rietema	2006	2008
Orlando, FL/New Heart Fellowship	H	Felix Fernandez	2006	2008
Rowland Heights, CA/Rowland Hts.	H	Esther Kiyose	2006	2008
Thousand Oaks, CA/Thousand Oaks Comm.	K	Jeong Jin Yoo	2006	2008
Vancouver, BC/Yaletown CPD	A	Mary-Lee Bouma	2006	2008
Residencies				
Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Start	End
Rochester, MN/Living Stone Church	A	Kyle & Wendy Haack	2006	2008
Seattle, WA/The House	A	Brian & Betsy Turnbull	2006	2008
South Hamilton, MA/North Shore Resid.	A	Ryan Bradley	2006	2008
Traverse City, MI/Traverse City CPD	M	Bryan Berghoef	NFP	NA
*KEY: A = Anglo, B = Black, C = Cambodian, F = Filipino, H = Hispanic, I = Indonesian, K = Korean, L = Laotian, M = Multiethnic, N = Native American, NFP = Non-funded partnership agreement				

#### Funding conclusions: Ministry year 2007

Anaheim, CA/Hope of the World	Sang Myeun Moon	6/30/07
Ashburn, VA/Hope Community	Marty McGinn	1/10/07
Cambridge, ON/River City	Darrell Bierman	6/30/07
Cerritos, CA/Korean LDN	Andy Choh	5/2/07
Lacombe, AB/Wolf Creek Community	Andy Geleyense	6/30/07
Los Angeles, CA/Community	Doorn, Verheul	6/30/06
Los Angeles, CA/ Iglesia Cristiana El Buen Samaritano	Rene Cortez	9/11/06
Los Angeles, CA/Kings Chapel Harvest	Joseph Wright	3/13/07
Los Angeles, CA/Joy Community	David Suh	6/30/07
Los Angeles, CA/LA Global	Theodore Lim	6/30/07
Plano, TX/Great Light Presby.	Eun-in Chang	6/30/07
Ridgefield, NJ/Tree of Life	Kooksung Kim	6/30/07
Santa Ana, CA/High Power Ministry	John Gonzales	2/28/07
Santa Monica, CA/The Talking Stick	Rich Braaksma	6/30/07
Standish, ME/Crossroad	Doug Walker	6/30/07
Valparaiso, IN/Daybreak	Rob Knol	5/20/07
Winfield, IL/Vietnamese New Hope	Huu Phy Nguyen	6/30/07

#### *D. Educational mission*

Denominational campus ministries are placed at the gateways of leadership in our culture. They call college students, our future leaders, to consider God's mission in their own pursuits and to seek the nurture of God's church.

#### 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.crh.m.org](http://www.crh.m.org)).

The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on campuses in Canada and the United States. As of January 2008, twenty-three campus ministries are supported by Home Missions' partnership-assistance grants. They are

Chicago State University (Black)	University of Calgary
Dalhousie University	University of Guelph
Fanshawe College	University of Iowa
Ferris State University	University of Northern British Columbia
Iowa State University (Anglo)	University of Toronto
Iowa State University (Korean)	University of Waterloo
Kennedy-King Community College	University of Western Ontario
McMaster University	Western Michigan University
Michigan State University	Wilfred Laurier University
Passaic County Community College	William Paterson University
Queen's University	York University
University of Alberta	

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, others include hundreds of students.

Home Missions also supports a program of emerging leaders in campus ministries and 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. Educational mission leadership

Rev. Peter Schuurman works .75 full-time equivalent as a binational educational mission goal specialist on the CRHM Eastern Canada regional ministry team in Guelph, Ontario. Ms. Joyce Suh now works .25 full-time equivalent as the educational mission goal specialist for the Korean/California South regional ministry team. Rev. Schuurman and Ms. Suh help coordinate partnerships with the U.S. ministries. They also consult with CRC campus ministries, employ current ministry standards and evaluation tools for campus ministries, and marshal denominational (and other) resources for campus ministries.

Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association (CRCMA), Home Missions supports annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The agency also supports the CRC's ongoing work toward developing and refining the vision and goals of CRC campus ministry across North America. Together, Home Missions tracks campus ministry trends, explores campus ministry issues and concerns, and helps set the course for ongoing mission in higher education.

3. Educational mission support for Red Mesa schools

Home Missions 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, principal of Zuni Christian Mission School. Home Missions is privileged to continue to journey with the New Mexico Christian schools in a partnership of denominational subsidies matched by increasing local ownership.

E. Mission-focused leadership development

1. Leadership development networks

In classis-based partnerships, Home Missions supplies support to leadership development networks (LDNs). An LDN is a three- to four-year, in-ministry training program available in Spanish or English. The current locations are

Location	Leader
Alberta	Curtis Korver
British Columbia	Wilma VanderLeek
California	Kevin Adams
California	Al Breems
California	Andy Choh
California	Albino Melendez

Colorado  
Florida  
Illinois  
Maine  
Manitoba  
Massachussetts  
Michigan  
New Jersey  
New Jersey  
New Jersey  
New Hampshire  
Ontario  
South Dakota  
Texas  
Washington  
Washington

Peter VanElderen  
Luis Pellecer  
Pedro Aviles  
Bill Johnson  
Robert Visser  
Hill Jonson  
Dave Beelen  
Ricardo Orellana  
Ramon Orostizaga  
Harold Sweetman  
Brent Averill  
Kevin DeRaaf  
Jim Hoogeveen  
Mike Johnson  
Doug Fakkema  
Betsy Turnbull

## 2. Calvin Theological Seminary master's degree in missions

Home Missions partners with Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper College to offer an online education program to bring accredited education to mission students. Home Missions supports Dr. Gary Teja in directing this program.

## 3. 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 for Ministry program

Once a mission-focused leader has been identified and trained, Home Missions helps determine where this person can best fulfill a missionary calling. Directions for Ministry 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.

## E. *Spiritual formation, small group discipleship, and prayer mobilization*

Home Missions' prayer and small group development people connect and supply resources to churches and ministries through consultation with and training of church leaders and members. Home Missions' website ([www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org)) provides resources and equips churches through print and electronic publications.

Prayer and small group ministry include leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism. More than 2,600 people participated in over 115 events in 2007.

Thirteen CRHM small group ministry developers throughout Canada and the United States, as part of their role on regional teams, 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, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) International, National Coalition of Men's Ministries, the de-

nominal Prayer Leaders Network, and the Classical Renewal Ministries Team to assist efforts in prayer, small groups, and evangelism.

#### **IV. Regional ministry teams and partnership grants overview**

More than one hundred committed and gifted Christian Reformed Home Missions' staff are now serving the churches and classes on twelve CRHM regional teams, inclusive of CRHM regional leaders. These committed servants are serving the churches and classes in their respective regions. Sixty percent are paid staff, and forty percent serve as volunteers. In addition to the regional ministry team staff, several of the teams have partner teams aligned with the classes of their region. These partner teams multiply regional efforts with a larger number of partners who are working with CRHM to accomplish goals and strategic initiatives. The impact is greater awareness and momentum for engaging in Christ's mission through mission-focused churches, educational mission, and church planting. Specialists on the teams are also giving leadership to small group development, spiritual formation and prayer, and leadership development. Home Missions knows that capacity to serve the churches and classes of the regions has increased significantly as regional leaders and teams experience the synergy of the team. There is clear evidence that the goals of reorganization through regionalization (set in 2003) are being achieved.

Capacity for Christ's mission is being achieved through many new leaders who have signed on to serve as staff (paid and volunteer). These are leaders who have assignments that relate to CRHM's main goals and purposes. Our knowledge of the teams is an opportunity for us to be blessed by their strong commitment and ownership for Christ's mission as it is engaged by the CRCNA in North America and expressed by these added workers for the harvest.

Classes, congregations, and members of the CRCNA are being served in increased ways through these teams. Nearly all of the teams have engaged in conversation with, or are planning to visit, church councils and classical committees to listen to the needs and challenges they face in reaching their communities for Christ. They are serving classes, leaders, and congregations with vision casting, consultation, and encouragement. There is increased influence and impact.

The teams are serving one another with what we call best practices as well as the overall efforts of CRHM as a unified and distributed organization. Home Missions is beginning to experience the benefit of receiving "leadership from the edge."

One goal of each CRHM regional team is a more robust communication system within their region. It is the desire of CRHM, through its regional teams, to partner with and assist the churches and classes for their engagement in Christ's mission. Keeping everyone well informed of what God is doing and how the mission is progressing is a high value. It is also vital for the agency's respective teams to exchange information with each other.

There are also significant challenges for the teams. Several teams (Korean and Hispanic regional teams along with the East United States, North Central, and Western Canada regional teams) have extensive geographical regions. This represents a logistical challenge for pulling together a representative team in a way that provides for good stewardship of time and

financial resources. Another challenge is that teams are currently made up of volunteer and paid staff. The amount of commitment and investment of time and energy requested of volunteers is significant. Regional leaders must seek to be good stewards of financial resources as well as of the gifts, skills, and time of volunteer staff.

Church planting and the funding of other mission initiatives through the CRCNA churches in Canada is receiving a wonderful boost from the approximately \$1 million Sea to Sea Legacy funds. The process for investing these funds into mission strategies in Canada is now under way. The funds serve as a “multiplier” for the ongoing CRHM partnership grants allocated to ministries in Canada. For each proposal submitted to CRHM, a parallel request is made to the CRC Foundation (where the funds are held). The funds are invested according to the following percentages:

- Cultivating healthy churches – 10%
- Leadership development – 10%
- Funding new church plants – 80%

The chart below shows how grants are allocated in FY 2008-2009:

Church planting	
Residency	253,500
New churches	1,748,617
Parent churches	10,000
Fundraising	<u>2,000</u>
Subtotal	<u>\$2,014,117</u>
Mission-focused churches	
Churches	462,925
Mission-focused Coaching Center	30,000
Mission-focused Smaller Churches	<u>108,600</u>
Subtotal	<u>\$601,525</u>
Heritage churches	
Heritage	<u>11,834</u>
Subtotal	<u>11,834</u>
Leadership	
Internships	294,903
Leadership Development Networks	<u>103,700</u>
Subtotal	<u>\$398,603</u>
Educational Mission	
New Mexico schools	318,850
Campus ministry grants	397,800
Emerging Leadership Initiative	<u>8,000</u>
Subtotal	<u>\$724,650</u>
Total grant budget amount	\$3,750,729

## V. 2008-2009 Home Missions Ministry Plan Scorecard budget

	% of Total	2008	2009
1. Community			
A. Transform lives and communities worldwide			
Educational mission grants and department	80%	417,731	420,931
B. Create and sustain healthy congregations			
Church planting and development grants	100%	1,833,475	2,094,700
Mission focused churches grants	50%	273,700	300,000
Church planting and development department	80%	317,040	452,880
Regional ministry teams (mission focused churches/ church planting and development)	68%	1,574,985	1,727,261
Ministry teams team	25%	10,812	13,912
Management and general	30%	288,575	278,100
		4,298,587	4,866,853
2. Process			
A. Transcend boundaries			
Educational mission grants and department	20%	104,433	105,232
Regional ministry teams	12%	277,938	304,811
Ministry teams team	25%	10,812	13,412
Management and general	20%	192,517	185,400
		585,700	608,855
B. Disciple believers			
Small group ministry developers	100%	113,000	146,300
Mission focused churches grants	50%	273,700	300,000
		386,700	446,300
C. Develop leaders			
Church planting and development leadership	20%	79,260	113,220
Interns	100%	200,000	250,000
Regional ministry teams	20%	463,231	508,018
		742,491	871,238
D. Nurture children and youth			
Red Mesa schools	100%	318,500	305,760
E. Become ministries of choice			
Ministry advancement department	10%	115,000	111,400
3. Learning and Growth			
A. Develop staff capacity			
Ministry teams team	50%	21,625	27,825
Management and general	30%	288,575	278,100
		310,200	305,925
4. Resources			
A. Ignite generosity			
Ministry advancement department	90%	1,035,000	1,002,600
Management and general	20%	192,517	185,400
		1,227,517	1,188,000
Totals		\$8,402,426	\$9,125,262

## VI. Ministry advancement

### A. Financial gifts

Home Missions' ministry share dropped 0.7% (\$36,244) totaling \$5,071,945. Above-ministry-share gifts (non-estate) increased 0.9% to \$1,505,477 and estate gifts experienced an increase of \$8,248 (4.1%). Although conference and registration fees dropped 3.1 percent to \$150,201, a significant increase in unrealized gain/loss on assets boosted the bottom line. Overall, total revenue was up \$452,730 (5.9%). Home Missions is extremely thankful



for the 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 the six-person ministry advancement team that underwent staff changes during the year. Mr. Jim Steenbergen, development officer, left Home Missions to pursue other opportunities. In spring 2007, Home Missions hired two new development officers: Mr. Rick VanTil and Ms. Afton DeVos. Mr. Ben Van Houten continues as senior writer of Home Missions, and Ms. Kristie Schrotenboer serves the advancement team as administrative assistant. Rev. Jack Stulp, in his 50th year of ministry in the CRC, serves as manager of church relations. A number of volunteers also continue to support God's mission both in the binational office and with funded ministries. Home Missions is currently recruiting development officers to work in both Canada and the United States.

#### C. *Communications*

Home Missions uses a variety of means to communicate with its audiences. The Internet has become an increasingly important part of the communications mix. Several publications are sent to churches, individuals, and staff by way of email. The Home Missions' website, [www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org), is used to convey information such as news, prayer needs, and other information. The site was redesigned to align itself with the newly designed denominational website.

Worship bulletins and related material in English and Spanish are available to the churches for Easter and Reformation Day when many churches receive an offering for Home Missions. Six *On a Mission* newsletters and several other promotional materials were published. Home Missions used the pages of *The Banner* to communicate stories of God's mission work throughout North America. Material for the Prayer Guide and for bulletin announcements was also provided. All Home Missions' material is available at [www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org).

Home Missions board members and board alternates receive a monthly email newsletter called *First Friday Focus*. Church planters receive the monthly *Pastor's Memo* e-newsletter. Home Missions also provides speakers for Missionary Union tours.

### VII. **Classis Renewal Ministry Team**

Home Missions is a founding partner agency with CRWRC of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team (CRMT) 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 knowledge 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 has provided renewal resources to classes, maintaining partnerships, specifically around the questions of renewing a sense of community within the churches of the region and how to structure classis for ministry effectiveness.

## VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Mary Buteyn, Home Missions board president; and Rev. John Rozeboom, Home Missions director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the election of regional board members for a three-year term.

C. 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 considers it both a challenge and a privilege to join in God's mission with Christian Reformed congregations, ministry agencies, and schools.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed Home Missions  
John A. Rozeboom, director

### I. Introduction

*Preparation and implementation* are two words that describe the work of Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) in the past year. Having defined our mission, vision, values, and key strategies, we worked with field leaders to define how these ideas will play out. All field and regional leaders now have training that they can take to the rest of the missionary team.

In North America, we have focused on increasing our contribution to congregational health as it relates to missions. As churches change, we strive to offer support and leadership in mobilizing congregations for the task of fulfilling the Great Commission.

### II. Ministry in Canada and in the United States

By listening to and observing churches active in missions, Christian Reformed World Missions has heard messages that point toward greater congregational initiative in finding mission partners abroad, in supporting specific types of mission and in sending short-term mission teams.

Our response has been to restructure our staff to make people available in the United States and in Canada to consult with and lead congregations in these efforts. Two missions resource consultants have spent the past year researching and developing resources that help congregations to define their mission vision and to guide the development of healthy mission strategies and models.

Straddling the international and the North American facets of our mission, a special projects department is working on bringing together a passion for specific types of ministry at home and abroad. Christian education and library development are two areas that we have identified as bringing the interests and talents of people and congregations in North America together with the skills of international partners and missionaries. For example, a Christian school in Pella, Iowa, can be blessed by a relationship with a Christian school in the Dominican Republic or in Japan. In the library ministry, we seek to offer education to librarians in other countries and assist them in creating and sustaining good Christian libraries.

These are exciting new projects in which we feel God's blessing and which we expect will yield great results in furthering his kingdom.

The Christian Reformed Church has much to offer the world in the ongoing work of announcing the reign of Christ. We seek to do so by joining our gifts with those of congregations, organizations, and other Christian partners.

### III. Highlights from 2007

We are encouraged by the grace and blessing that God continues to show as we seek to serve him at home and around the world. Following are a few examples from the past year:

A. In February 2007 the Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone officially organized as a denomination and ordained two pastors. Their faithfulness throughout a decade of civil war and after we left the country inspires and humbles us as their mother church.

B. We started a three-year project in which we help fund the translation and publication of leadership training materials for Christians in Laos. To accomplish this, we partner with Faith CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa; some Laotian CRCs and pastors in North America; and BILD International in Ames, Iowa. This is an example of the new ways we are finding to add value to what CRC congregations can do in global ministry. This example also shows how we can help an ethnic minority group in the CRC in North America to be involved in ministry in their home country.

C. We have the privilege of helping to start the tenth church of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico in Tijuana. This new mission is located on the eastern edge of Tijuana and is on the forefront of a rapid expansion of the city. The new mission is called Agua Viva, which in English means "Living Water." Our desire is that many who come to this dry and barren yet booming city will find a cup of cold water that refreshes the soul and quenches spiritual thirst.

#### D. *Additional stories*

##### 1. Jeff Bos – Bangladesh

Melissa Bos recounts the following incident: "A few months ago my friend came over for a visit. She visits often, but this day there was urgency in her voice. After a little chit-chat, she finally said, 'I heard that your Christian book prophesies about the coming of Mohammad.' I was at a loss."

So she asked Jeff, who was working at home that day. He handed her a Bangla translation of the Bible, and directed her to John 14:16, where it says, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth." Jeff explained that the word *Counselor*, or *Comforter*, is translated from the Greek word *paraclete*. Islamic scholars believe that *paraclete* was a corrupted term, and the original Greek manuscript actually used a word that means *Praised One*, which always refers to the Prophet Mohammad.

Her friend sat down with the book and read for twenty minutes! She had no more questions, so we do not know what she concluded from her reading. Melissa shares, "I pray that my friend continues to show interest, and that the Counselor may give us the boldness to discuss the truth with her."

##### 2. Frank Sawyer – Hungary

One of our seminary students went to Germany to work for a while at a diaconal center to improve his German language skills. He returned with a second-hand washing machine, and everyone thought he would put it in his home when he graduated and married. But he put it in the church meeting hall and invited the street children for a meal and an opportunity to wash their clothes twice a week.

##### 3. Larry Spalink – Japan

Our partnership in Numazu, bringing a South Korean missionary into a cooperative project with Christian Reformed Japan Ministries and the Reformed Church in Japan, has proven to be very fruitful. Rev. Na's four years of service introduced the church (and Reformed Church in Japan

pastors who have visited there during the prolonged vacancy recently) to a more participatory, joyfully expressive form of worship, revitalized the church's zeal for prayer and evangelism and resulted in very good momentum for the church. There are five people waiting for baptism (four of them men), and young people, both Christians and seekers, have begun to attend worship and bring their friends. Though racist tension is common between the Korean and Japanese peoples, the obvious blessing of God has been abundant and powerful.

#### 4. Honduras

Olympia CRC in Washington invited CRWM Honduras to apply for a special project offering that their church receives each year for a ministry outside of the United States. CRWM Honduras shared with them the need of a CRC-Honduras church in the town of El Naranjo. The El Naranjo congregation is very active in community projects but had a church building with cracked walls and floor that was no longer safe for worship. The Olympia congregation gave an offering to assist in rebuilding the church and the purchase of land for a theological training center. The congregation has been seeking other ways to be involved with the community and church in Honduras. Through CRWRC, Olympia CRC is in the process of developing a long-term relationship with a community in another part of the country. We praise God that from small seeds of conversations and contacts, long-term relationships of mutual learning and joint ministry are developing.

#### 5. Cal and Jamie Hofland – Guinea

When we went to greet the new prefect in Tougue (who happens to be an evangelical Christian), he was meeting with several leaders from an entirely Muslim area where we had been teaching. One leader shared with the group that his community had much division and strife. But because of the seminar, their community was beginning to heal, people were communicating with each other, and the division was decreasing. He highly recommended this teaching to the other leaders present.

#### 6. Harold Kallemeyn – Timothy Leadership Training (West Africa)

One of the participants in Timothy Leadership Training in West Africa, Pastor Andre Iba, a former school teacher, showed great motivation and skill in implementing this training in the context of his local church. Many of his local and district church members were mobilized for visitation despite the dangers of civil war that ravaged his district. In November 2007 Pastor Iba gathered more than a hundred evangelists, pastors, and other church leaders for a week of training in agricultural development and preaching. The initiative is supported by a French evangelical mission that helped to pay some of the travel costs to enable poorer pastors to attend the conference.

### IV. Looking ahead

When we stated our new mission and vision only a few years back, we were not quite sure how we would get there. We wanted to help Christian Reformed churches fulfill the Great Commission and engage vigorously in mission work around the world.

Today that vision and its methodology are coming into sharp focus. As we look ahead to the next twelve months, we see CRWM empowering congregations with the resources and support they need to make decisions that will have strategic impact in their own mission outreach.

We see our consultants helping congregations to refine their mission identity. We see our special projects coordinators creating links between churches with similar interests in missions both at home and abroad. We see congregations engaged in international missions partnerships.

In short, we see the steps we need to take to bring our vision to reality—and we have taken the first few already.

**V. Program report for recruitment and training**

Training programs prepared long-term, short-term, and summer mission program (SMP) participants.

Of the support needed by World Missions to keep a career missionary family on the field, about 40 percent comes from denominational ministry shares. An average of fourteen sending and supporting churches supplies most of the remaining support through faith-promise and other above-ministry-share gifts. Individuals also support missionaries directly. This support is important and will be even more important in the future.

Short-term partner missionaries and SMP 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 where they serve.

All of World Missions’ fields and projects and 96 percent of its two hundred fifty 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 mission mobilizers 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 2008 *Yearbook*, 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 December 2007, World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the CRC through World Missions:

Years of service	Name	Location
5 years	Liz Busuttil	Burlington Office
10 years	Tom and Deb De Ruiter	Mali
	Ruth Padilla DeBorst	Ecuador, El Salvador
	Tom and Michele Postema	Japan
15 years	Lois Craven	Hungary/Grand Rapids Office
	Robert Harris	Philippines
	Al Karsten	Burlington Office
20 years	Gene and Dawn Michelson	Mali
	Bill Thornburg	Nigeria/Grand Rapids Office
25 years	Frank and Aria Sawyer	Puerto Rico/Honduras/Hungary

30 years	Gary Bekker	Philippines/Theological Educ./ Pastorate/Grand Rapids Office
	Wayne and Sandy De Young	Honduras/Dominican Republic/Haiti/ Pastorate/Mexico
35 years	Paul Kortenhoven	Nigeria/Pastorate/Sierra Leone/ Grand Rapids Office
	Russell Palsrok	Pastorate/Nigeria/Philippines
40 years	Dave Dykgraaf	Nigeria
50 years	Lou Tamminga	Pastorate/CRCNA office

## VI. Collaboration with other CRCNA agencies

In the international outreach effort, World Missions collaborates with The Back to God Hour, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 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.

## VII. Salary information

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

## VIII. Board nominations

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

### *Region 4*

*Rev. Derek Bouma* is the solo pastor at Riverside CRC in Wellandport, Ontario. He holds a B.A. from Redeemer University College and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Bouma has been a member of the classical interim committee and chair of the 150th Anniversary Committee for Classis Niagara. He has been a delegate to synod two times. Rev. Bouma currently serves as chair of the Classis Niagara classical ministerial leadership team. His wife spent a year in the Philippines teaching with CRWM, and his sister is currently teaching in Nicaragua with CRWM. He is diligent in his responsibilities, promotes and supports denominational ministries, and is well respected.

*Rev. Rita Klein-Geltink* is pastor at Lucknow Community CRC, Lucknow, Ontario. She holds a B.A. from Redeemer University College and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Prior to ordination, she had a career in administration for twelve years at Redeemer. Rev. Klein-Geltink has previously served on the board of Cambridge Christian School and various committees at Maranatha CRC. She has leadership abilities and team-workability.



#### *Canada member-at-large*

Ms. *Patsy Orkar-Sagara* is the community project manager with The Centre for International Governance Innovation, managing the collaboration of international development organizations and Canadian government representatives on an online platform. She holds a B.A. in psychology from Calvin College and an M.A. in organizational leadership from Azusa Pacific University. She is a member of Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario, and an active participant at The Journey (a local church plant). Ms. Orkar-Sagara is a member of the advisory committee, which plays the role of church council, and the adult ministry team for The Journey. She has served with CRWRC for ten years in Rwanda, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mali. She is a committed gifted leader, strong Christian with many administrative and leadership skills, and has a passion to see the good news of Jesus shared holistically around the world.

Ms. *Nelly Sinclair* is a member of Iron Springs CRC in Iron Springs, Alberta. She holds a B.A. in music from The Kings University College, is a homemaker, and homeschools her children. Ms. Sinclair currently serves on a spouses task force for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and on the library committee. She and her husband and children served with Christian Reformed World Missions in Mali from 1992 to 2001. She has an interest in missions and is willing to serve.

#### *Region 11*

Dr. *Kojo A. Quartey* is an African and active member of the African Community Fellowship CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He holds a bachelor's degree in accounting, a master's in economics, a Ph.D. in applied economics, and post-doctoral fellowships in finance and leadership. Dr. Quartey is a highly respected individual within the African community and will bring an African perspective of diversity to the board. Presently he is dean of the Donald W. Maine School of Business at Davenport University, which provides leadership for the curriculum involving 300 faculty and 6,000 students. Dr. Quartey currently serves on the boards of Humanity for Africa; World Affairs Council; Rotary Club of Grand Rapids; World Community Service; and STRIVE, a mentor program. He also serves on the youth committee and is fundraising committee chair of African Community Fellowship CRC. He is a professional with great insights, is dedicated, committed and devoted to the church.

Mr. *Jerry Van Veen* is a member of Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a devoted Christian interested in serving his Savior in every facet of life. He is owner/operator of a local printing company and a successful businessman. Because of his desire to assist in the work of God's kingdom, Mr. Van Veen does a lot of work for a number of Christian organizations. He serves as a Cadet leader and mentors through Kids Hope. He and his wife host dinners for young adults in their home, so he also has a good perspective on the attitudes of this age group as well as the perspectives of his peers. Mr. Van Veen is a graduate of Calvin College with a B.S. in sociology and has served on the Grand Rapids Christian High School board.

#### *Region 12*

Rev. *Gary Roest* is the pastor of Ocean View CRC in Norfolk, Virginia. He holds a B.A. in industrial arts from California Teaching Credential, and an



M.Div. and Th.M. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Roest has served as a missionary in Taiwan and Hong Kong for twenty-one years. He has served as a juridical person for mission-owned property in Taiwan and was treasurer of the Taiwan Mission for fifteen years. Rev. Roest has also been a clerk and council member.

*Ms. Lauren Yoon*, fluent in Korean, is a member of Love CRC in Clifton, New Jersey, where her father, Rev. Sun Ho Chung, is pastor. She holds a B.A. in chemistry from New York University and an M.A. in chemistry education from Columbia University: Teachers College, New York. Ms. Yoon has worked as senior account executive at Arirang Trading, Inc.; as past president and founder of Cacci Trading, Inc; and presently works as president and founder of Belle International, LLC. She has worked extensively for the Eastern Home Missions board as its first female member. Ms. Yoon organized the first fundraising dinner for the Eastern Home Missions board and formed the Hearts to China organization in 2006, which helps poor, underprivileged, and outstanding school students in China. She works with the Sunday school program and fills in as organist and pianist. Ms. Yoon has a passion to see the gospel brought to all nations.

## **IX. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the president of World Mission-Canada, Rev. Robert Loerts; the president of World Missions-USA, Rev. Archie Vander Hart; and the World Missions director, Dr. Gary J. Bekker, the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and representing World Missions to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

B. That synod elect by way of the printed ballot those slates of nominees presented for election to the Board of World Missions.

C. That synod along with the Board of Trustees 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:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Missions  
Gary J. Bekker, director

## **I. Introduction**

*Restoration through collaboration:* only three words are needed to describe the full scope of CRWRC's work in the world. If only three words are needed, then the work must not be too difficult, right? But there is possibly nothing more challenging on this earth than the work of restoration and collaboration.

Colossians 1 paints a powerful picture of restoration, acknowledging that through Christ every aspect of creation, every relationship, is in the process of redemption.

The knowledge that God is with us in the here and now lies in the hearts of all who carry out CRWRC's work in the world, as well as in the hearts of those we are privileged to partner with. Where the trampling of creation is worst—where there is despair and hopelessness caused by poverty, disaster, HIV/AIDS, injustice—CRWRC is in thousands of those communities working—empowered by the Holy Spirit—to restore freshness, hope, faith, and freedom again.

CRWRC's way of working in this world is by collaboration. Instead of saying, "It's easier to just do it ourselves," CRWRC engages humbly and wholeheartedly in the complexity of partnership with individuals, churches, and community organizations in thirty countries. With Christ's power, our web of relationships becomes a "power of one community," where each one's gift is used for restoration.

Someone recently told a CRWRC staff person, "You're a greasy guy." He went on to clarify that CRWRC is "the grease helping all the cogs involved move together, helping them find their way together." Why choose this slower, more complicated way? Because getting the work done is only half the story. Building the capacity of communities and churches is the other half.

CRWRC staff feel privileged to be used by God in this ministry, and we are grateful for the support we receive from the Christian Reformed Church.

## **II. Board matters**

An important support to CRWRC's ministry is our board. The primary function of the board is to set the vision and mission for CRWRC and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

The CRWRC governance structure is made up of delegates from the classes, in addition to up to twenty-seven members-at-large, which constitute the Board of Delegates of CRWRC. The delegates are a vital communication link with classes and churches. They 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. Canadian Board of Delegates nominees*

CRWRC respectfully requests that Synod 2008 elect each of the following three nominees as members-at-large to the CRWRC Canadian Board of Delegates and to appoint Ms. Gerda Kits to a second three-year term.

*Mr. José Francisco Angulo* and his family moved to Richmond Hill, Ontario, in 2007 and are members of Community CRC. Prior to living in Richmond

Hill, Mr. Angulo and his family were members of Friendship Community Church in North York, Ontario, where he served as Board Treasurer and Vice Chair. He is employed by a telecommunications company in Toronto and is in the process of finishing his master's degree in information systems through Athabasca University. Originally from Colombia, he speaks Spanish and English, with some proficiency in French, Italian, German, and Portuguese. While in Colombia, Mr. Angulo worked with Colombia Christian Missionary Alliance, serving as Youth Leader for the Antioquia (Medellín) area. He came to Canada as a refugee applicant, but ultimately was welcomed via the immigration process. He helps new Canadian refugees and landed immigrants to settle in Canada. Mr. Angulo is eager to serve on the CRWRC Board of Delegates and to use his professional and life experience toward serving others in this capacity.

Mr. Chris Pullenayegem migrated from Sri Lanka to Toronto, Ontario, with his wife and three children in 2001. His academic training is in law, psychology, and management. Mr. Pullenayegem served voluntarily in many senior ministry positions within the Reformed Church of Sri Lanka and as a board member in various national Christian organizations. He has wide ministry experience and worked for a short while with CRWRC as a director of community development and diaconal development in Sri Lanka. Mr. Pullenayegem worked as an immigration officer and trade counselor for the Canadian government in Sri Lanka for twelve years before migrating to Canada. In Canada he was employed as a refugee policy analyst at Citizens for Public Justice in Toronto, where he was able to use his experience and knowledge of immigration and refugee law and policy to propose policies for newcomers founded on principles of public justice. He is a worship and ministry development team leader in his local church and works part time for CR Home Missions in Canada as a ministry specialist assisting in church planting and development efforts in the greater Toronto area.

Rev. Paul Lomavatu is pastor of Cariboo Community Church, a church plant in Williams Lake, British Columbia. As a church planter, Rev. Lomavatu will bring a unique perspective to the CRWRC board as it strives to build stronger relationships with emerging churches and to learn from their experiences in North American community development. Such churches are quickly gaining experience in engaging and bridging the disparity between the underdeveloped and developed world through justice and compassion.

#### *B. U.S. Board of Delegates nominees*

CRWRC is grateful to Ms. Jackie Terpstra and Mr. Fred Van Swol for their service on the U.S. Board of Delegates as members at-large. Neither Mr. Van Swol nor Ms. Terpstra is able to fill a second term.

CRWRC recommends that synod elect Mr. Marvin DeBoer, Mr. Lawrence DeRuiter, and Mr. Stan Cole to a second three-year term as members at-large. In addition, CRWRC recommends that synod elect Mr. Vince Bivins as member at-large for a third term of three years.

### **III. CRWRC's Programs and ministries**

#### *A. International development*

CRWRC's ministry is transformational. Programs in health, agriculture, literacy, clean water, micro-enterprise, and so forth are important. However,

these programs are integrated into a community focus that emphasizes local leadership and ownership while addressing systemic issues that keep them in poverty. Physical, spiritual, and social transformation based on biblical principles is the effect we are working for with our many partner organizations.

Positive change is happening in the lives of poor people and in their communities. More mothers are surviving childbirth, more children are living past their fifth birthday, men and women are saving and investing money to improve their lives and the lives of their children. More children are going to school.

Business associations, through our partnership with Partners Worldwide, bring hope to local entrepreneurs around the world. During 2007 the Million Mentors program in Nicaragua and Haiti finished a collaborative three-year program funded by members of the Global Business Alliance and a grant from the United States Agency for International Development. The final evaluation reported positive results in most areas, especially in terms of establishing or strengthening business associations and the creation or retention of jobs.

In communities where persistent and cyclical drought creates several months of hunger for families, farmers are practicing new techniques to save water for food crop yield increases. In many communities where CRWRC and our partners work there has been a decrease in the number of months of hunger. In some communities they have seen food security (sufficient food) for the whole year—perhaps for the first time ever. Access to land is another important aspect of finding food security. In Nicaragua, three CRWRC partners are working together to implement a program called “Land for Landless Farmers.” This program enables poor farm families to purchase land and make it productive.

This year alone, 15,587 people are learning to read. With literacy and numeracy skills, they not only enjoy a better quality of life; they are able to protect themselves from others who take advantage of the illiterate. They are able to manage their cash flow and help their children with their school work. All of these benefits build self confidence and hope.

Because CRWRC has been working diligently in teaching people about their rights, people are standing up for themselves. Widows have regained title to property and possessions that were stolen from them when their husbands died. Dalit people from India (“untouchables”) are finding their place in society and asserting their legal right to work, to own property, and to have their children attend school.

The search for rights, confidence, and hope come together in Honduras, where the Association for a More Just Society (ASJ or *la Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa*) worked with Diaconía Nacional (National Diaconate of the CRC in Honduras) to establish legal and psychological clinics in two communities.

Peace has come to many communities that have experienced years of conflict through the efforts of trained peacebuilders. Generational conflicts are understood as part of a history that does not need to be repeated today. The difficult work of healing and forgiveness is being led by CRWRC church partners in several countries.

Increasingly, churches around the world are reaching out to people who are living with HIV and AIDS. Only a few years ago churches shunned

people who were HIV-positive. Today many churches have solid programs in orphan and vulnerable-child care, community care programs that minister to the very sick and dying, and education programs that include abstinence and faithfulness.

Today CRWRC offers Synod 2008 a message of hope and confidence. Our work is strong and successful because of the support given us by the members of the Christian Reformed Church and the dedicated work of our partners.

The work of transformation with poor communities around the globe requires highly skilled and rare individuals. The work is costly not only in terms of program dollars but also in terms of commitment on the part of personal staff. CRWRC staff may face a mother whose child is dying of malaria and then later that day return to the office to submit reports to donors and churches as well as to look ahead to make good program plans. Our staff need to hold hope in their hearts while everything around them testifies to the urgency and hopelessness of a broken world. Their need for not only physical stamina but also spiritual strength is imperative. Pray today for CRWRC staff members who give beyond what is expected to bring the message of hope to the partners and communities with whom they work. In Christ, everything is made new.

In total, CRWRC is working in 25 countries,\* with 98 partners, involving 569,477 people and their 2,463 communities in learning, organizing, and mobilizing for permanent, positive change for themselves and future generations.

\*This number of countries reflects our permanent ongoing community transformation work. This number does not include additional countries that the relief program reaches.

#### *B. North America: Restoration through collaboration in the United States*

In Muskegon, Michigan, the McLaughlin neighborhood has experienced years of decline and social malaise. CRWRC has worked with the community and existing institutions to partner together to build relationships and restore their neighborhood. In McLaughlin the following groups have joined together to make a permanent positive change in their neighborhood:

- Residents in the neighborhood
- Bethany CRC and a couple of other neighborhood congregations
- Sacred Suds (a small non-profit)
- Volunteers in Service (a regional CRWRC-supported intermediary organization)
- A neighborhood association
- Bethany Housing Ministries
- The city of Muskegon
- The federal government (AmeriCorps program)

When a vision for change is owned in the community, when neighbors put their own resources on the line first, it is amazing what they can do as supportive institutions supplement their resources and work. CRWRC partners with over 225 congregations in more than 100 neighborhoods around the United States, replicating this kind of story.

While most requests coming to CRWRC initially came from Pentecostal and independent churches who wanted to establish signs of God's reign in

their communities, we are grateful for a surge of requests from CRCs in the past year.

We are grateful for new staff in the Chicago (Ms. Bethany Dudley) and the Southern California Korean community (Mr. John Choi). Through the hard work of staff and the supportive networks and churches in communities around the United States, CRWRC and partners are restoring hope and creating positive energy in neighborhoods around the country.

*C. Justice education and advocacy: Motivating congregations to live out their call to justice*

Justice education continues to be an important and integral part of CRWRC's work. This year we focused strongly on education about justice, and HIV/AIDS and the interrelation of the two. Advocacy around HIV/AIDS was an even greater priority in 2007 with the launch of the *Embrace AIDS* education and fundraising campaign. Postcards were distributed to churches in Canada and the United States around World AIDS day, to be sent to the prime minister and president. Hand-in-hand with this focus, CRWRC gathered over sixty staff and partners from around the world in an Africa Convergence, concentrating mainly on East, West, and Southern Africa. The purpose was to look at how systemic justice issues affect the HIV/AIDS pandemic and how CRWRC can improve responses to both justice and HIV/AIDS.

Visits to churches and regional gatherings continue to be an essential way to educate and motivate congregations to live out their call to justice. Congregational justice groups lead in many churches on issues of justice and advocacy; some issues dealt with in the past year include the environment, peace building, and HIV/AIDS. We are also renewing our antiracism task force. CRWRC is working closely with the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action on equipping and mobilizing local justice groups at the congregational level. This type of grassroots mobilization will continue to be a priority as we move forward for justice.

*CRWRC Justice Coalition Partners:* CRWRC is yet involved with the Micah Challenge. July 2007 marked the halfway point on the Millennium Development Goals; recent actions focused on accountability related to achieving the goals and ways to move forward. In Canada, CRWRC continues to work with KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives on their climate change campaign. We are also working in partnership with Diaconal Ministries Canada, the Committee for Contact with the Government, and many other networks and coalitions dedicated to engaging Christians in the call to justice.

*D. Disaster relief and rehabilitation*

"Unity in Christ" may well be one of the best ways to describe our experience as we, together with fellow Christians, step forward to reach out to survivors of disasters. Collaborating with other organizations in order to implement effective disaster response programs has, one could say, become second nature to CRWRC's disaster response and rehabilitation team. In our domestic and international response programs, our networking with a variety of church and Christian non-government organizations has been blessed and been a blessing to literally hundreds of thousands of disaster survivors around the world.



## 1. Partnerships

Just about one-half of CRWRC's programming in disaster relief is possible because of our membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). This year, two additional members joined the CFGB, bringing the membership to fifteen Christian denominations—all united around the biblical mandate to "End Hunger." With generous financial support of virtually all CFGB members, CRWRC took the lead agency role in a large number of programs that provided assistance to a total of more than eight hundred thousand people around the world. We are thankful that this year another Canadian church coalition called Canadian Churches in Action (CCA) was assembled. CCA members plan to extend the cooperation taking place within the CFGB on food and food security programming, toward a similar cooperation in the area of non-food disaster response programs.

Our participation in the U.S.-based Global Relief Alliance, a consortium of Christian Relief and Development agencies, has made it possible to run programs in extremely difficult areas of the world like Sudan and Chad. Through our membership in the U.S.-based Association for Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations (AERDO), the Canadian Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA), and the Geneva-based Action of Churches Together (ACT), we experience Christian unity, finding partners to jointly address the considerable challenges when natural disasters and conflict combine in what are called "complex emergencies." Our domestic disaster responses, through CRWRC-Disaster Response Services (DRS), are all about collaboration. One demonstration of this is in the leadership role that the organization has played with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (National VOAD) ever since its founding in the mid-1990s. This is a national forum in which all the major non-profit disaster response organizations work together to plan their collaborative efforts in responding to natural, as well as man-made, disasters in the United States. Included are the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR), Lutheran Disaster Response, America's Second Harvest, Catholic Charities, and many more. Over the years, four of the CRWRC-DRS directors have served as either board presidents or vice-presidents and have consistently set the pace of leadership in disaster response and recovery work in the United States.

In addition to its role with the National VOAD, CRWRC-DRS has a very active organizational capacity building program whereby local organizations are established and mentored after a major disaster to ensure the involvement and leadership of the community in its own recovery. CRWRC-DRS is so well known and respected in the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) typically recommends that one of the first steps for a community to take in its recovery is to call in a CRWRC needs assessment team. This is one of the many ways that CRWRC-DRS has been able to let the light of Christ shine brightly in an often troubled world. Maintaining well respected programs like this helps communities and brings honor to the Lord.

## 2. Volunteers

We believe that our constituents give CRWRC a clear message: "We want to be involved." They see reaching out to vulnerable disaster survivors as an intricate part of being a Christian and a member of a congregation. Once again, CRWRC-DRS was blessed with an outpouring of committed volunteers as we helped restore communities affected by disasters in North America. Over 3,200 volunteers, working a total of 309,206 hours, helped with needs assessments, cleanup, repair and/or rebuilding, and organizational capacity. They brought the love of Christ to over 38,000 families in 2007. CRWRC-DRS was also blessed with more than 200 volunteer church groups from 116 churches that assisted Hurricane Katrina survivors.

## 3. Projects

In North America during the year 2007, CRWRC-DRS was heavily involved in Mississippi and Louisiana with Hurricane Katrina recovery, which will go on for several more years. Thankfully, we have experienced two successive mild hurricane seasons, contrary to all forecasts. This has allowed long-term recovery programs to continue in the Gulf States, where CRWRC-DRS has been responsible for the rebuilding of over 2,000 homes. In addition to assisting communities to recover from hurricanes, CRWRC-DRS has been faithfully involved in responding to disaster-impacted communities in California, Washington, North Dakota, Minnesota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, all of which were devastated by record flooding, tornadoes, or wildfires.

## 4. International relief

### a. Sudan

The suffering in Darfur, Sudan, where now more than 4 million people are depending on handouts by the United Nations and other aid organizations, is continuing unabated. Violence by government and rebel troops and general lawlessness are growing, and peace negotiations have gone without permanent results. In the middle of this, CRWRC and its five consortium partners faithfully continue their work with 90,000 beneficiaries in three districts. Because there are many days when we cannot use our vehicles for risk of losing them in armed holdups, staff often have to travel on camels and donkey carts to the camps. We do experience God's faithfulness in the strong and continued financial support from so many of our supporters. This year, great gains were made in the area of agriculture. More than 40 percent of the population now indicate that more than 30 percent of their food comes from their own fields. However, where last year we could with thankfulness report that health surveys indicated an improvement in the health of children under five, we have seen a significant deterioration of that situation. Although assistance is still forthcoming, there are indications that the hopelessness of the situation starts to affect families psychologically—particularly mothers. With no resolution of the conflict in sight, hope in the future seems to fade, robbing many mothers even of the strength to properly care for their children. CRWRC, which



together with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGFB) has been funding this \$2.5 million (Canadian) program over the last two years, has now been joined by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is providing 40 percent of necessary funding.

b. Pakistan

Last year we reported on CRWRC involvement in the devastating earthquake that struck the Kashmir border area between India and Pakistan. This year the southern Pakistan provinces of Balochistan and Sindh, situated next to the Afghanistan border, were struck by flooding, aggravated by the breaking of several large and some smaller dams. More than 250 lives were lost, thousands of houses destroyed, and most of the precious irrigated land in this arid region ended up covered with a foot or more of silt. CRWRC, in partnership with Pakistani Christians from the capital Islamabad, is implementing a CFGFB matched Food for Work program. The villagers are cleaning up and rebuilding the villages and cleaning the land of silt while CRWRC is providing food to those who can work and to those too weak or too old to work. We are thankful that through our collaboration with a local Pakistani organization, we are able to help bring healing and share God's love in an area that would normally be totally inaccessible to CRWRC.

c. Nicaragua

On September 4, 2007, Felix, a category 5 hurricane, devastated the Raan district in northeastern Nicaragua. Hundreds were killed or missing, while 60 percent of the houses and general infrastructure was destroyed in this, one of the poorest areas in the country. CRWRC, together with partner Christian Medical Action, was able to develop a number of emergency and rehabilitation activities to come to the aid of the 160,000 Felix survivors. After the initial emergency response, we started a CFGFB matched food and seed project of \$600,000, which assisted more than 13,000 people until the next harvest would come in. An additional \$150,000 was made available to CRWRC by CIDA to assist with survivors' non-food needs. A generous gift of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund allowed for a rehabilitation project that will see farmers rebuild their rice seed stock with even better seed quality than before the hurricane. Through collaboration with several organizations, both private and governmental, CRWRC was able to direct nearly a million dollars of needed resources to Felix survivors, helping them to rebuild their lives.

d. Kenya

Already last year ethnic tensions, which exploded after the allegedly fraudulent December 2007 elections, had caused low-level conflicts in September between the different ethnic groups in Kenya's Mount Elgon region. Thousands of people lost their houses and livelihood, becoming Internal Displaced Persons (IDP). CRWRC in collaboration with the Reformed Church of East Africa implemented a CFGFB matched food distribution program benefiting 48,000 hungry people without other means of income. The food stores already in place for

this project in Mount Elgon allowed us to immediately redirect some of the food to assist conflict-affected people in other parts of Eastern Kenya, people marooned in and around churches. As this report is written, we continue to develop additional opportunities to assist victims of this conflict, including those who lost their houses and businesses in Nairobi shantytowns due to arson.

e. Uganda

Unusual long and violent rains struck Uganda in the fall of 2007. At one point, close to one-third of the country was inundated. Crops and livelihoods were lost, and tens of thousands of people were forced to higher places and shelters for weeks. Collaborating with the Church of Uganda, the Pentecostal Church of Uganda, and the Teso development organization, CRWRC's relief team is implementing a CFGB matched food and seed distribution. This \$3.3 million project, in collaboration with and generously supported by the Mennonite Central Committee and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, assists more than 65,000 people for a seven-month period. Collaboration between international and local non-government organizations, resulting in a well-structured consortia, is increasingly becoming the preferred model to address these large and catastrophic events.

f. Indonesia

The CRWRC livelihood and reconstruction project in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in response to an earthquake that destroyed more than 350,000 houses, will draw to a close in March 2008. In collaboration with the Indonesian Reformed Church (GKI) we repaired 562 houses and rebuilt nearly 1,800 small but solid, earthquake-resistant houses. Not only has this project, which was poorly funded, been a significant witness of God's love in this 95 percent Muslim area, but appreciation for the work of the GKI has resulted in support by the population in the establishment of a GKI church.

In addition all CRWRC-funded projects in our tsunami response in Aceh have been finalized. Yet the collaborations developed with other international aid organizations and the strong support by local communities allow CRWRC to continue their activities on two fronts: first, in the completion of houses and infrastructure projects funded by the Mennonite Central Committee with a matching grant of the Canadian Government, and, secondly, in a two-year livelihood project funded by Tearfund UK, planned for completion by May 2009. Tearfund has approached us to collaborate on an additional \$500,000 house construction project. We have also experienced what could be called a total attitudinal change by the local Muslim population. Their appreciation for CRWRC as a Christian organization that came to them in their hour of need and their warm relationship with our staff are a witness of God's grace in this setting.

g. Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka we are in the final stages of CRWRC's presence in this country. Much has been accomplished. More than 400 temporary and 900 permanent houses have been built. The self-build methodology

developed by our project managers has increased the confidence of hundreds of men and particularly women. In addition, hundreds of families have been assisted in regaining their livelihood, and peace and understanding have developed between warring ethnic groups.

#### 5. Foods Resource Bank (FRB)

The Foods Resource Bank (FRB) is a unique partner of CRWRC that engages the farming communities of the United States with the problem of world hunger. As an implementing member of FRB, CRWRC was able to invest \$434,000 in food security programs last year in 24 communities around the world, from Africa to Central America to Cambodia. The funding is made possible by communities, usually initiated by a local church, that are willing to commit agricultural resources in the form of acreage, equipment, inputs, and so forth for growing corn, raising livestock, or producing other agricultural products that will be sold. The proceeds are then contributed to CRWRC's programming account or to the account for the specific food security program sponsored by CRWRC. Additional matching funds have been available from USAID, providing a unique opportunity for church communities in the farming areas to have a significant impact on the problem of world hunger. The opportunity for growth is only limited by our willingness to get involved and by our creativity in coming up with new extensions of this wonderful agriculture-oriented model. City churches often get involved by partnering with rural churches and helping to provide funds for seed and fertilizer. Sometimes they simply partner so that they can lend prayer support. Already more than thirty Christian Reformed churches in the United States are involved in a growing project in this important work.

Many other smaller projects have been part of the activities of the CRWRC disaster response and rehabilitation team. Resettlement of IDP in Liberia, shelter for flood victims in Mali and Mexico, stoves and blankets for Iraqi refugees in Jordan—these are just some of the many examples of how the Lord has been using us this year. Looking back, we are humbled and marvel at his grace, feeling his presence and blessings, granting us his shalom.

#### *E. Community services*

##### 1. ServiceLink-US

ServiceLink-US helps to create collaborative partnerships between North Americans and local communities in the countries where CRWRC works. It's amazing to see the transformation that is occurring in everyone involved.

One such example is the volunteer experience of Ms. Janell Ball. She spent one year volunteering with CRWRC in Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. Her goal was to interview communities in the three countries on their best practices regarding agricultural methods and food security. Once she had completed the interviews, she created a user-friendly manual for the local partners to consult as they develop additional programs.

Here is an excerpt from a newsletter Ms. Ball wrote about her experience:

If there is one lesson I hope to carry with me from this experience throughout my entire life, it is that the only way to move forward from survival and into thriving is by keeping a dependency on God that surpasses a

dependency on the world, or myself. It's remembering, always, that truly knowing oneself has to do with understanding who your Maker is and who he intended you to be.

a. Volunteer placements

ServiceLink-US placed 272 volunteers in opportunities of collaboration this past year. These volunteers served in 13 countries and served 31,669 hours. ServiceLink-US sent tours and work teams to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Uganda, and Nigeria. There continues to be an increase in the number of young adults ages 18 to 35 who are seeking a 6- to 12-month international opportunity. Many of our interns often pursue opportunities after their internship that keep them involved in some area of community development.

b. Bridgers

As there is a continual increase in the number of inquiries from individuals to become involved in CRWRC's work, a new position has been created—that of a bridger. The bridger program aims to create effective collaboration between local communities and North Americans by facilitating volunteer and tour visits to the field. By the end of 2007, three bridgers were already in place in Honduras, Kenya, and Nigeria. There are plans to hire two additional bridgers by June 30, 2008, with placements in the Philippines and Uganda.

c. International staff internships (formerly Program HOPE!)

This year, CRWRC decided to revamp its 30-month internship opportunity, formerly known as Program HOPE! The program has been shortened to 24 months to allow interns to pursue graduate school programs immediately following the end of their term. A new benefit: the program will provide up to \$7,000 in education and resettlement allowances once an intern has successfully completed their two-year term. CRWRC currently has interns in Kenya, Sierra Leone, Laos, and Romania. In the coming year, interns will be placed in Honduras and the Philippines.

2. ServiceLink Canada

ServiceLink Canada, in its twelfth year of serving the Christian Reformed Church in coordinating volunteers with its many ministries, is another cog in the mechanism of CRWRC's collaborative efforts for restoration. Church members continue to pour their hearts and lives into helping others and thereby sharing faith, hope, and love in some of the world's darkest places—places and people crying for justice and mercy; people longing for a new creation.

Out of the 360 volunteers who served with our denomination, 52 percent (188 volunteers) served with CRWRC in various capacities, contributing a total of 37,575 hours. A number of teams worked on various building projects (homes, ministry centers, and water systems) and traveled to countries such as Honduras, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Romania, and Uganda. Three additional groups traveled overseas with the intent of learning more about the work and ministry of CRWRC. Unique to those opportunities was the Refugee Learning Tour, where participants who were already engaged in refugee work in their own communities traveled

to Kenya and Uganda to visit and experience refugee life in a number of settlements and transit camps. There they witnessed and heard about the difficulties and challenges faced by the many people living in these situations and, as such, the tour deepened participants' understanding of refugee issues and CRWRC's Refugee Program.

Volunteers who served on an individual basis included young adults engaged in internships with CRWRC ministries, two of which were facilitated in partnership with The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, and their Social Justice office, the Micah Center. The King's University College also continues to partner with CRWRC in their annual Honduras Water Project, for which students in the International Development course receive class credit. Students spend the month of May in Honduras to learn about the Honduran way of life and international community development, and they put their arms and backs into helping build a water system in a remote village.

Other individual volunteers were engaged as international relief managers, often working in partnership with the Canadian Food Grains Bank in the distribution of food, seeds, and tools in areas of disaster; accountants engaged in audits or in coaching local finance managers; story writers; children's ministry programmers; agriculturalists and nutritionists with the Grain Amaranth program in Africa; educators; and, last but not least, volunteers engaged in Canada to promote the work of CRWRC at the local level.

*F. Classis Renewal Ministry Team*

CRWRC is a founding partner agency of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team (CRMT) 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 knowledge about ministry at the classis level. Prayer support as well as other means of mutual encouragement—including a quarterly newsletter and a website—are key emphases of this work. The team continues to partner with twelve classes in a mutual learning covenant. Work is ongoing in the areas of program self-assessment, promoting classical diaconal ministry, gathering new sources for classical funding of ministries, and providing mentors to classes whose leadership needs to be encouraged. Mr. Frank Engle served as staff in the first half of 2007. At present, CRMT is looking to lodge its functions more solidly within the CRCNA structure and strategic plans.

**IV. Finance**

*A. 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	2	1st

## *B. Detailed financial information*

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2008—Financial and Business Supplement*.

## **V. Human resources management**

CRWRC's human resources management function continues supporting CRWRC in recruitment, new staff orientation, performance management, and supervisory development. As a result of increased government grant-funded programs (e.g., AmeriCorps and Child Survival), the human resources function also supports CRWRC in human resources-related government grant compliance. In 2007 we have filled twenty-one staff positions and have reached our gender, diversity, and internal promotion goals. More than one-half of CRWRC's staff are female. Almost one-half of our leadership positions are filled by women and one-third by staff of ethnically diverse backgrounds. CRWRC is implementing a plan for bolstering staff communication and collaboration skills through a Crucial Conversations® training initiative.

## **VI. Resource development**

CRWRC staff and volunteers are able to collaborate for the betterment of towns and villages around the world because of the support received from churches and individuals. Much of this support comes from Christian Reformed churches. The CRC synod asks churches to take four offerings each year for CRWRC, which does not receive ministry shares from the denomination. One of these scheduled offerings is for World Hunger in the fall, a program that offers materials to include every member of the family in learning about those in need around the world and how to help. These offerings make up a core part of CRWRC's financial support in a given year.

Churches are also reaching out through CRWRC in other ways. More and more churches are connecting with individual CRWRC field staff around the world—receiving their newsletters, praying for their specific needs, and supporting them specifically with financial gifts. Additionally, churches are partnering with churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America through CRWRC's Church Relations offices, developing relationships with pastors and their congregations for mutual benefit.

Many Sunday school classes, youth groups, church choirs, and more learn about CRWRC and collect donations for its ministry through a variety of children's giving projects, youth 24-hour fast programs, and other learning experiences.

CRWRC is also overwhelmed by the generosity of individuals, both in the CRC and beyond. Gifts are given to support general ministry needs, for specific countries or ministries, for gift catalog items, for disasters both in North America and abroad, for the *Free a Family*® program, and more. Donations come to CRWRC via [www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org), memorials, walk-ins, school classrooms studying a country in which CRWRC works, and more.

This year CRWRC began a two-year Embrace AIDS campaign, designed to help CRWRC staff and partners expand their HIV/AIDS prevention and care programming throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa. CRC churches and individuals are showing their support of this increased effort

of HIV/AIDS response with financial gifts, fundraising events, and publicity to their own communities.

In total, CRWRC received \$16,465,145 in support from churches and individuals last year. They also received \$8,781,060 in grants from Partners Worldwide, foundations, and the U.S. and Canadian governments. Interest from CRWRC's Joseph Fund and other investments provided an additional \$884,811 to CRWRC for a total revenue base of \$26,131,016.

These numbers are down from the previous year largely because there was no major disaster during the year. Praise God!

For additional financial information, please see CRWRC's Annual Report (available at [www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org)).

## **VII. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Chris Van Spronsen, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. John Richey, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Ms. Ida Mutoigo, 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.

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the CRWRC Canadian Board of Delegates.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee  
Andrew Ryskamp, director, CRWRC-U.S.A.  
Ida Mutoigo, director, CRWRC-Canada



## **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. A similar fund exists for the benefit of Christian Reformed churches in Canada. The Loan Fund Board of Directors oversees the loan approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the CRCNA.

## **II. Board of directors**

The terms of Mr. Ronald Haan and Mr. Calvin Jen expire on June 30, 2008. Mr. Haan has served for one term and is eligible for reappointment.

Mr. Jen was appointed in the fall of 2007 to complete the term of Mr. Scott Lee who resigned from the Loan Fund board.

The board requests that synod appoint Mr. Calvin Jen to a first term of three years. Mr. Jen is a member of Madison Square CRC and is a professor of business at Calvin College. Mr. Jen is a graduate of the University of Michigan and previously was the founder and principal architect of AMDG Architects, Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served on the Loan Fund board for one year.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Mr. Ronald Baylor (2009), Mr. Donald Koopman (2009), Ms. Christina Bouwer (2010), and Rev. Chad Steenwyk (2010).

## **III. Growth of operations**

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in thirty states—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—and in the District of Columbia. 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, 2007), a total of \$25,787,850 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to five years, and interest rates vary from 1.74 percent to 7.06 percent, with a time-weighted average of 4.41 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect 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 one hundred and sixty loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 2007, a total of \$25,860,023 was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2007, one loan was seriously delinquent. The Loan Fund maintains this loan loss reserve to cover events such as this, and the reserve is adequate to cover other potential losses.



D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data:

	2005	2006	2007
Cash and equivalent	\$5,310,302	\$5,995,722	\$3,088,218
Investments		\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Loans and accounts receivable	\$16,439,365	\$17,361,345	\$25,976,308
Equipment & software, less depreciation	\$10,780	\$33,650	\$25,238
Total	\$21,760,447	\$25,390,717	\$31,089,764
Notes and accounts payable	\$17,142,047	\$20,436,606	\$25,787,850
Net assets			
	\$4,618,400	\$4,954,111	\$5,301,614
Total liabilities and net assets	\$21,760,447	\$25,390,717	\$31,089,764

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 2007, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2008—Financial and Business Supplement*.

#### IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.
- An unsecured line of credit with a bank which permits borrowings of up to \$2 million. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

#### V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Alice Damsteegt (88% of full-time), and Carl Gronsman (75% of full-time), 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 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 by way of the printed ballot elect 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, director

### I. Introduction

The mission of Faith Alive Christian Resources (Faith Alive) is

To provide resources that call people to follow Jesus Christ by helping them to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

The core values that we have identified for our work 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.
- 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 becoming an ever-greater challenge as we work in a contemporary world that reflects trends such as

- decreasing loyalty to denominations and all institutions.
- increasing expectations of choices in all areas of life.
- increasingly diverse denomination.
- explosion of new technology.

The following is a summary of the work, governance, and administrative developments of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for suggestions that may help us provide better service to Christian Reformed churches so that they can enhance their ministries.

### II. Board organization, membership, governance, and other administrative matters

#### A. *Organization*

A board of up to eighteen delegates, one from each CRC region, and up to six at-large delegates (three from the RCA) elected by synod governs Faith Alive. The board ordinarily meets three times annually in September, January, and April. 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 Faith Alive board through June 2007 are Rev. Kenneth Baker, president; Mr. Jim Lipscomb, vice-president; Ms. Irene Bakker, secretary; and Mr. Tom Prince, treasurer.

#### C. *Nominations of board members*

##### 1. At-large delegate

The following slate of nominees are presented to synod to fill an at-large position designated for someone from the Korean community:

*Rev. Ron Chu* has an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the senior pastor of Orange Korean CRC in Fullerton, California, and a member of the classes executive team for Classis California South. *Rev. Chu* has served in various roles in the PC(USA), including at the Presbytery and general assembly level. He has also been involved in church education ministry (children, youth, and adult) since 1978, including helping develop curriculum for Sunday school and for teacher training, and leading teacher training seminars.

*Rev. Joseph Hyoung Joon Chun* has an M.Div. from Talbot Theological Seminary and a bachelor of engineering degree from YonSei University in Seoul, South Korea. He is copastor of Ephesus Church in Whittier, California. *Rev. Chun* is the Korean classical coordinator and serves on the classical leadership team for Classis Greater Los Angeles. He also serves as the editor of *Voice of the Reformed*.

## 2. Regional delegates

The following slate of nominees for Region 11 are being presented for vote at the spring classis meetings.

*Ms. Donna Huisjen* is a member of Woodlawn CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has been an editor in the Bible Department at Zondervan for over ten years and is the author of devotions for children and adults. *Ms. Huisjen* has served as a deacon at Woodlawn.

*Ms. Carol Smith* is a member of Moline CRC in Moline, Michigan. She has been involved in the following ministries in her church: GEMS, Coffee Break, Story Hour, and small group ministry.

## 3. Delegates eligible for a second term

The following delegates are completing their first term and are nominated for a second term: *Rev. William Nieuwenhuis*, *Ms. Mae Cooper*, and *Rev. Kenneth Baker*.

## 4. Delegates from the Reformed Church in America (RCA)

The Faith Alive board nominates the following person to serve as the alternate RCA delegate to the board:

*Rev. Tom Grabill* has an M.Div. from Western Theological Seminary and a master of arts in community agency counseling with a marriage and family emphasis from Western Michigan University. He has been the pastor of congregational life at First Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan, for the past ten years. Prior to that, *Rev. Grabill* served as the church's youth pastor.

## D. Faith Alive director position

In response to the indication by Gary Mulder that he plans to retire as director of Faith Alive Christian Resources in November 2008, the Faith Alive board at its September meeting appointed a committee to review the senior staff structure of Faith Alive. The committee recommended that this structure be retained for now. At its January 2008 meeting, the board appointed a search committee to find a nominee to fill the director position. The search committee has been asked to complete its work by the September 2008 meeting of the Faith Alive Christian Resources board.

According to bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, appointments to agency director positions need to be approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and submitted to synod for ratification. Given the timing of this process, it would not be appropriate to have a nominee ready for this year's synod for someone to assume the position next November. So the board asks the following:

That synod empower the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to ratify, on its behalf, the appointment of the new director of Faith Alive Christian Resources.

*Grounds:*

1. It is unlikely that the search committee given the task to fill this position will complete its work in time for synod.
2. Because the current incumbent of this position, Mr. Gary Mulder, does not plan to retire until late November 2008, a June appointment of a replacement would be premature.

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

As Faith Alive staff does its planning for new resources, it does so with careful attention to the strategic priorities and goals incorporated in the denominational ministries plan (DMP).

Faith Alive staff has also been heavily involved in the development of the balanced scorecard, which is designed to help implement the DMP. Faith Alive is committed to working with other denominational agencies and institutions to help ensure the success of this initiative.

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

- The Editorial Department provides all the CRC-developed English publishing resources needed by Christian Reformed Home Missions to carry out its ministry. We also work with a number of other agencies in this way.
- World Literature Ministries works with the mission agencies to provide publishing support for their foreign-language literature needs. Most of this work is focused on Spanish-language resources.
- We partner with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in a number of ways, including co-publishing resources. For example, we are currently working with the Institute in publishing a number of songbooks as part of the strategy for publishing a new bi-denominational hymnal with the Reformed Church in America.
- *The Banner* regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions. In fact, each issue of the every-household *Banner* includes eight pages of information about denominational agencies and ministries in the Church@Work section, as well as regular coverage in the news section.
- We provide order fulfillment services for several of the CRC agencies.

*F. Relationships with other organizations*

During the past few years, Faith Alive 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:

- Reformed Church in America (RCA)—One of the most significant developments in recent years was the agreement to enter into a full partnership with the RCA whereby Faith Alive Resources is the resource provider for the RCA. This agreement was implemented on December 1, 2004, and has been working well.
- Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA)—Several years ago we formed a partnership with the Presbyterians for Renewal organization within the PCUSA. This organization, serving over 3,000 evangelical congregations, is a copublisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. More recently we have begun discussions with the publishing arm of the PCUSA to explore a possible publishing partnership. The PCUSA has decided to carry our *Friendship* curriculum and may also carry our *Kid Connection* curriculum.
- We work closely with the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) on their annual conference. We also partner with the nascent Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE).
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)—Our entire catalog, along with an endorsement letter from the general secretary of the EPC, and numerous other promotional materials, are sent to the churches of this denomination.
- Christian Schools International—We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM)—We also meet twice annually with the staff of DYM to discuss plans and opportunities for collaboration.
- Baker Book House—We periodically copublish books with this publisher.

#### G. *Use of Faith Alive Resources by CRC churches*

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by Faith Alive. In fact, about 85 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. Approximately 70 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our curricula for children. 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 since our *Walk With Me* and *Kid Connection* curricula are being positively received by churches from many denominations as a high quality, easy-to-use curriculum. The number of churches that use our doctrinal courses for youth is considerably lower than 70 percent.

#### H. *Recycling*

At its 1990 meeting, the Faith Alive board adopted a report of the task force on Faith Alive and the environment. At its April 2007 meeting, the board adopted an enhanced policy suggested by the Green Press Initiative and became a signatory of the Book Industry Treatise on Responsible Paper Use. The 1990 report contained several goals regarding Faith Alive's use of recycled paper. Until recently approximately 98 percent of Faith Alive

materials were printed on recycled paper. However, due to lack of availability of recycled paper for the type of paper we use, many of our products (e.g., *The Banner*, children’s curriculum papers) are no longer printed on recycled paper stock.

The CRC Product Services Department, in its negotiations with printers, also tries to use recycled paper for its work.

I. *Antiracism*

Faith Alive continues to be an active participant in the effort of the Ministry Council to respond to synod’s directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC via a staff antiracism team.

The Faith Alive board also has an active antiracism team committed to achieving the following vision approved by the board:

The Faith Alive board covenants to become an antiracist community by respecting and valuing cultural diversity as a God-given asset of the human family.

J. *Salary disclosure*

Faith Alive, 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	1	2nd
17	1	1st
15	1	3rd

III. Faith Alive ministry

A. *Periodicals Department*

1. *The Banner*

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 every-household *Banner* continues to be well received by a vast majority and wide variety of CRC members. As reported to Synod 2007, a survey of a sample of CRC members in the fall of 2006 showed that 86 percent of respondents indicated that they read substantial portions of *The Banner* compared to 58 percent in a 2002 survey of CRC members. In another indication of widespread support for *The Banner*, the annual fund-raising campaign successfully raised almost \$300,000 from *Banner* readers to support the magazine.

The editor of *The Banner*, Rev. Robert De Moor, continues to provide the overall leadership for the magazine on a 60 percent FTE basis. He also serves as pastor of preaching and administration at West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. This arrangement works well. In January 2008, Rev. De Moor started “Bob’s Blog” on the *Banner* website as part of the staff’s

attempt to increase readership and accessibility. In addition, the audio version of *The Banner* can now be downloaded as MP3 files.

*The Banner* will experience a significant staff change on June 30 when managing editor Ms. Joyce Kane retires. This development triggered a move toward more integration of *The Banner* editorial staff and the other editorial staff of Faith Alive.

*The Banner* staff continues to look for ways to improve the magazine so that its readership will continue to expand. Examples of changes in the past year include

- adding reviews of more popular media productions in the “Tuned In” section.
- beginning a column for parents on raising children.
- beginning a column written by young adults called “Next.”

A representative sample of articles that received the most response during the year includes the following:

- “A Modest Proposal” by Sam Hamstra
- Editorial by Rev. Robert De Moor on why youth are leaving the church
- “A Closet of Compassion” by an anonymous author
- “Harry Potter and the Way of Jesus” by Sylvia Keesmaat

During the past year, *The Banner* actively supported the celebration of the denomination’s 150th anniversary in a variety of ways, including (1) scheduling a page in each issue featuring stories about ways in which God’s grace has been experienced through the generations, and (2) providing extensive coverage of the various celebrations around North America.

The network of news correspondents continues to be a valuable resource for *The Banner*. The survey mentioned earlier showed that the news section is the most widely read section of the magazine.

## 2. *Voice of the Reformed*

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

## B. Editorial Department

The goal of this department is to be the first-stop resource provider for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.

### 1. Curriculum

#### a. For children

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



The most important activity of this ministry is publishing curriculum for children. The *Walk With Me* curriculum and the *Kid Connection* curriculum (a new curriculum for smaller churches that came out last September) are the flagship curricula we currently publish for children. A total of about 1,900 churches, 650 of them CRC, use at least one of our core curricula for children.

The number of churches who drop our children's curricula each year (over 500) makes it difficult to keep a significant customer base in this ministry, which is the most significant source of income for this department. Staff is doing research regarding the reasons for churches dropping our curricula. Other denominational publishers are experiencing a similar trend.

Given these realities, staff has begun the planning process for our next children's curriculum.

b. For youth

The most important curriculum that we offer for youth, in our view, is curriculum that teaches the doctrines of our church to youth. We publish two resources to support this ministry: *Questions Worth Asking*, a two-year course on the Heidelberg Catechism with a cutting edge pedagogy, and *HC and Me*, which incorporates a more traditional pedagogy.

Other significant resources for youth published recently or on the drawing board include the following:

- *Don't Know Much About Church History*
- *The Seven Deadly Sins*
- *Believe It*—a course on CD and on the web about the Belgic Confession
- A CD/web-based course on the Contemporary Testimony

c. For adults

The most significant new series of products for adults published by Faith Alive is the *Disciples* program. This multiyear program, which came out in summer 2007, offers an integrated approach that helps adults at all stages of this spiritual journey grow in their faith walk. The second year of this program will focus on some of the spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible reading, and worship.

Three of Faith Alive's more traditional Bible study series for adults are *Discover Your Bible*, designed to support the Coffee Break ministry of Home Missions; *Discover Life*, designed to support men's Bible study; and a more intensive Bible study series called *Word Alive*.

Other planned resource for adults include additions to *A Reformed Look At . . .* series:

- *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, and Evolution*
- *Bioethics: A Reformed Look at Life and Death*
- *Mature Content: A Reformed Look at Sexuality*

Because they anticipated that some of these books might become controversial, the board asked for and approved an editorial policy for this department during the past year.



Other products for adults include:

- A course based on the new CRC antiracism training called DORR (Dance of Racial Reconciliation).
- *Nurture*—a parent newsletter for churches to purchase and distribute to families.
- *Reformed Handbook*—a tongue-in-cheek look at the Reformed faith.

We are also revising a number of current titles that sell well, including *The Day of Christ's Return*, *Kingdom Equation*, and *Firstfruits*.

d. For people with mental impairments

The board of Friendship Ministries, an independent ministry, continues to raise funds to support the development and marketing of resources and program support for people with mental impairments. The basic curriculum for this program is a three-year curriculum called *Friendship Bible Studies*. Current publishing work is focused on a revision of the year-long course titled *Living God's Way*.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with Pathways International, a ministry in Minneapolis, staff continues to expand the list of resources available in Braille. A small ministry-share amount is designated for this work.

f. Training and consulting

Synod 2006 provided for some ministry-share dollars to support the establishment of a training and consulting office. Ms. Jolanda Malburg was hired to fill this office in the fall of 2006. She is focusing her work on providing training, support, and networking opportunities for church educators, including organizing training conferences for church educators, developing online and print training and support resources (e.g. newsletter), and developing a system of regional networks with church educators.

2. Resources for church leaders

Considerable planning has been done this past year to develop a more comprehensive plan for providing resources for church leaders. The following resources are on the drawing board:

- A revision of the current basic resources for elders and deacons to produce a guidebook for elders and deacons.
- A new resource titled *Missional Structures for Today's Church*.
- A DVD-based introduction to the roles of elders and deacons.
- A revision of *Discover Your Gifts* and *The Praying Church Sourcebook*.
- An updated *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.

3. Worship resources

The quarterly magazine *Reformed Worship* continues to provide churches with solid resources for their worship planning. There are approximately 4,200 subscribers; many from denominations other than the CRC. Because of a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, we have been able to place all prior issues of the magazine on the web.

Last year synod approved the development of a bi-denominational hymnbook developed in cooperation with the RCA. Since that time a

Hymnal Editorial Committee has been appointed and has begun its work. In addition, a committee made up of RCA and CRC representatives has been formed to develop common texts for our various creeds and confessions. Whether or not this committee is successful, the Heidelberg Catechism will be available in hymnals for the CRC in an approved CRC form.

Faith Alive is working with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to produce some precursor hymnals to the bi-denominational hymnal. A hymnal based on the New Testament will be published soon. Work is also proceeding on a hymnal based on the Old Testament.

We continue to work with the RCA staff to coordinate support for the children and worship program used by many of our churches.

### C. *World Literature Ministries*

#### 1. Introduction/overview

World Literature Ministries publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages—primarily Spanish. The Spanish line of products is published under the imprint Libros Desafio. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to and nurture them in a Reformed view of faith and life. Most of the books are translated works from English books in doctrine or biblical studies and are intended for church leaders.

As a result of the resignation of the World Literature Ministries director, Rev. Alejandro Pimentel, a process was initiated to examine the future of this ministry. At the time of this writing, this process has not been completed.

Among the significant new books published during the past year are the following:

- *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Longman/Dillard)
- *Introduction to the New Testament* (E.F. Harrison)
- *Contextual Pastoral Care* (Radillo)

A significant amount of staff time was spent this past year translating and editing a year of the Friendship Curriculum into Spanish. This curriculum, called *Amistad*, was published in December 2007.

The World Literature Ministries Department collaborates with other agencies, especially the mission agencies, through our board's World Literature Council, which includes representatives from all the CRC mission agencies.

#### 2. Korean literature

Several years ago, Faith Alive transferred all publishing in the Korean language to the Korean Council. The Korean Council has moved aggressively in translating and publishing resources, most of them Bible studies from the *Discover Your Bible* series, into Korean. The council works closely with a Korean publisher, called *CRC Publications*, in distributing these materials in Korea. It has also formed relations 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 and the Heidelberg Catechism.

#### D. Marketing and Customer Service Departments

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting.

The director of the Marketing Department, Mr. Tim Postuma, has decided to leave this department later this year in order to join the denominational communications office providing support for the denominational and agency websites. He has worked one-half time in that function since September 2007.

Although our print catalog remains a key vehicle for communicating with churches about our products, the web and email have become very important in recent years. Orders through our website account for over 30 percent of total sales; nearly 10,000 people have signed up for our monthly e-newsletter. Other communication channels include direct mail, conferences, print and web-based advertising, publicity, and order enclosures.

We promote our curricula to churches from a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Our spring mailings promoting our curricula normally are distributed to nearly 40,000 churches.

As indicated in the chart below, the CRC's publishing ministry is much broader than our own denomination; more than one-half of Faith Alive's accounts and sales for 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	853	18	\$1,365,000	42
RCA	648	14	\$ 472,000	15
PCUSA	944	20	\$ 530,000	16
Other	1632	35	\$ 861,000	27
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	536	12	\$ 314,000	10
Total	4613	100	\$3,228,000	100

Our Customer Service Department continues to provide excellent service to our customers. In a recent survey, respondents gave this department a 4.76 rating on a five-point scale for their service.

#### E. Personnel

The Faith Alive staff team is made up of just over thirty employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

Staff Council is a management group made up of the director, Mr. Gary Mulder, and representatives from the following departments: Ms. Joyce Kane, Periodicals (*The Banner*); Dr. Leonard Vander Zee and Ms. Ruth Vander Hart, Faith Alive; Mr. Tim Postuma, Marketing; Ms. Jane Hilbrand, Customer Service/Operations; Ms. Alina Pellecer, Customer Service; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services.

#### F. Finances

The Faith Alive Christian Resources board remains firmly committed to the goal that Faith Alive's ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that there may be projects undertaken (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests

them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This has been traditionally true for our World Literature Ministries Department. We also receive ministry-share dollars for the every-household *Banner*. Given the trend in recent years of churches changing curriculum frequently and the impact of this trend on our financial base, the long-term finances of our ministry will be strained.

Faith Alive submits (for synod's information) reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007, and budgets for fiscal years 2009 and 2010. These reports have been submitted to the denominational director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2008—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 2009.

#### IV. Recommendations

A. The Faith Alive Christian Resources board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of Faith Alive are discussed:

For the board

Rev. Kenneth Baker, president

Mr. Gary Mulder, director

For *The Banner*

Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For the Editorial Department

Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, director

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members to the Faith Alive Christian Resources board from the nominees presented.

C. That synod empower the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to appoint and on synod's behalf ratify the appointment of a new director of Faith Alive Christian Resources (section II, D).

*Grounds:*

1. It is unlikely that the search committee given the task to fill this position will complete its work in time for synod.
2. Because the current incumbent of this position, Mr. Gary Mulder, does not plan to retire until late November 2008, a June appointment of a replacement would be premature.

D. That synod recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 2009.

*Note:* Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance advisory committee.

Faith Alive Christian Resources  
Gary Mulder, director

## I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement and disability benefits for employees of denominational agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

## 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 several 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.

## 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 required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits to plan participants. The plans also provide benefits to the surviving spouse of a participant if the participant dies while in active ministry, as well as to any dependent children who are orphaned. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance product to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2007, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	839	247	1,086
Retired ministers	440	123	563
Spouses and dependents	137	24	161
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	91	17	108
Total	1,507	411	1,918

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 January 1, 2006, and furnished the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts for 2006, 2007, and 2008. Because the Canadian Plan was less than 80 percent funded as of December 31, 2007, it will be required to submit an annual valuation to the provincial regulators. Accordingly, information regarding church and participant assessment amounts for 2009 is not available for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that it will be included in the supplemental report to Synod 2008 and released to the churches and others following Synod 2008.

## 1. 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, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and is regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of December 31, 2005, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$108,400,000 for the U.S. plan and \$33,100,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the obligations that the plans have to over 1,900 active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2007	December 31, 2006
United States (U.S. \$)	\$109,296,000	\$106,855,000
Canada (Can. \$)	32,435,000	31,584,000

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.

## 2. Changes to the plan

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. The basic defined benefit form of the plan was not altered; 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 changes that affect them) made by recent synods include the following:

### 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 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.

2006 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the plan, effective January 1, 2006.

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.

### 3. Funding

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 2008 is \$31.00 per member in Canada and \$26.84 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$7,752 and \$6,064, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are 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 is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

As discussed previously in this report, costs for 2009 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 supplemental report to Synod 2008.

#### *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 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 periodic 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 several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by J.P. Morgan Chase Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Sun Life Financial Group.

As of December 31, 2007, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$21,425,400 in the United States and \$3,195,900 in Canada, and, as of that date, there were 385 participants in the U.S. plan and 108 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	257	61
Inactive	128	47

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 Mr. John H. Bolt, director of finance and administration, 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 2009 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 reappoint by way of the printed ballot Mr. James Clousing to the U.S. Board of Pensions for a second three-year term.

D. That synod reappoint by way of the printed ballot Mr. Harry Schep and Ms. Claire Veenstra to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a second three-year term.

Pensions

John H. Bolt, director of finance  
and administration



### I. Introduction

#### A. *Committee membership*

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which recently has been renamed the Candidacy Committee. The members of the Candidacy Committee were appointed in 2004 and meet three times per year.

The following members currently make up the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Jack Vos (2013), Mr. Roy Heerema (2013), Dr. Albert Wolters (2012), Rev. Henry Jonker (2011), Rev. Thea N. Leunk (2010), Dr. Jay J. Shim (2010), Dr. Analee Ward (2009), Mr. Rudy Gonzales (2009), Rev. Emmett A. Harrison (2008), Dr. Duane K. Kelderman (ex officio as the Calvin Seminary representative), Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra (ex officio as the ED), and Rev. David R. Koll (non-voting staff).

The Candidacy Committee recommends *Rev. Peter Choi* as a single nominee to replace retiring committee member Rev. Emmett Harrison as of July 1, 2008. Rev. Choi is a church planter in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is Korean and has been ordained in the CRC since 2005. Rev. Choi is currently working on an advanced degree in theological studies.

#### B. *Committee mandate*

Synod 2006 approved the Candidacy Committee mandate that initially had been prepared by the Board of Trustees at synod's request. The mandate reads as follows:

The SMCC [Candidacy Committee] shall:

- Foster the development of pastoral leadership in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), helping and encouraging the classes and councils to identify potential new leaders whom they can assist on their various journeys to pastoral office.
- Establish, with the approval of synod, standards that will result in consistency, fairness, and justice in applying the denomination's requirements for each person who desires to become a minister of the Word in the CRC, whether applying under Article 6, 7, or 8 of the Church Order, or who desires to be a ministry associate applying under Church Order Article 23.
- Maintain, clarify, and periodically review these standards.
- Assist the classes in the development of Classical Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLT) by providing them with information, counsel, and resources as they encourage individuals to seek the ministry as a vocation and as they support and make decisions regarding those who are preparing for or are applying to become a minister of the Word in the CRC.
- Implement and maintain regular contact with the classes to determine who from their churches are preparing for ministry and assist them in developing a ministry readiness profile.
- Recommend candidates for ordination to the synod of the CRC upon the individual's completion of the ministry readiness profile.
- Grant denominational licensure to exhort to students studying for the ordained ministry in the CRC.
- Provide support and accountability throughout the preparatory process for women whose council or classis has not declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3 inoperative and are unwilling to encourage and oversee women applicants for ministry.
- Provide resources to equip classes for the examinations required in the ordination process so that there is consistency throughout the denomination.

- Provide an annual report to synod and regular reports to the Board of Trustees for information.

(*Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 314-15)

In light of the changes to the Church Order approved by Synod 2007, the Candidacy Committee recommends the following change to wording of item 8 in the above mandate: “Provide support and accountability throughout the preparatory process for women whose council or classis does not support women in ordained ministry.”

### C. *Director of candidacy appointment*

With the development of the Candidacy Committee’s mandate, and the work activity surrounding the implementation of that mandate, the committee has benefited from the part-time service of Dr. Paul Bremer. It became increasingly clear, however, that the changes adopted by synod in the candidacy process, and the increased functioning of the Candidacy Committee, required more than a part-time staff person. A full-time person is needed to meaningfully implement the mandate.

A search process was initiated in cooperation with the office of the executive director, and a number of potential candidates were considered. At the conclusion of that process the search committee recommended to the executive director that the appointment be offered to Reverend David R. Koll. Rev. Koll began his service February 1, 2008.

## II. Ministry associates

### A. *Background*

When Synod 2006 approved the mandate for the Candidacy Committee, it added the assignment concerning ministry associates (Church Order Article 23). (See item 2 of the mandate.)

The addition of responsibility for the ordination standards for ministry associates has expanded the work of the Candidacy Committee. The committee has reviewed the background of the development of the office of ministry associate and has analyzed the regulations that govern ordination to that office. Because there appears to be substantial unevenness in the use of Church Order Article 23 and its regulations, the committee encourages churches, classes, and synodical deputies to carefully review the regulations for Church Order Article 23 and its Supplements.

The Candidacy Committee is operating with the understanding that when a person is approved to be a ministry associate, such approval does not automatically give the person a license to preach in a church or classis. In some situations, the work of a ministry associate position involves preaching, and if so, that requirement must be clearly stated in the position description that is approved by classis and the synodical deputies at the beginning of the process. If preaching is part of the approved position description, the classical examination must include the preaching of a sermon that has been evaluated by two members of the classis serving as sermon critics (Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a).

Furthermore, the Candidacy Committee wants to call attention to the “non-transferable” nature of the ministry associate ordination: “When ministry associates accept another call, their ordination shall require the approval of the classis to which their calling church belongs, to which the ministry

associates shall have presented good ecclesiastical testimonies of doctrine and life given to them by their former council and classis" (Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a).

### B. Reflections

As the Candidacy Committee continues its discussion and prepares to make recommendations to future synods in response to the mandate of Synod 2006, we see value in sharing some reflections at this time. In light of Synod 2007's significant decisions regarding the office of ministry associate, the committee is reflecting even more intently upon the office. At this time we offer synod the following key principles that have emerged in the reflection (the first three are actually Church Order or synodical principles).

#### 1. Ministry associate as *elder*

"Ministry associates shall be acknowledged as elders of their calling churches with corresponding privileges and responsibilities" (see Church Order Article 23-a).

#### 2. Ministry associate as *specialist*

"The office of evangelist [ministry associate] may be understood to have the character of *pastoral extension*. Evangelists [ministry associates] extend the work of pastoral leadership by founding and working in new congregations and by extending the ministry of organized congregations into *specialized areas*, including, but not limited to, youth ministry, education, pastoral care, worship, and evangelism. . . . These ministry positions may be identified by titles that indicate their ministry distinctiveness such as chaplain, pastor of education, pastor of youth, minister of congregational life, and so forth" (Ordination and Official Acts of Ministry Report, *Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 502-8).

#### 3. Readiness for ministry determined by *principle of proportionality*

Synod 2000 adopted standards for ministry in the areas of character, knowledge, and skills. In adopting these standards, synod also adopted the following guiding principles:

a. The Reformed confessional heritage is the basic foundation for all ministry-staff job descriptions. A principle of proportionality should be thoughtfully applied to all persons who fill staff positions in any Christian Reformed church. *The degree of understanding and skill required to apply the confessional tradition is proportional to the level of ministry responsibility assigned. As one's sphere of authorized service extends, so should one's capability for understanding, articulating, and discipling others in the Christian faith and Reformed confessional tradition.*

b. The CRC is committed to a theologically well-trained clergy and to maintaining the expectation that "the completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word" (Church Order Article 6-a).

#### 4. Ministry associate as a *step on a journey*

Ministry associates are encouraged to see their service as a ministry associate in a broader framework in which they continue to grow personally, spiritually, educationally, and professionally. Ministry associates are

encouraged to think of the office of ministry associate not necessarily as a life-long career track analogous to that of minister of the Word, but to consider continuing their education and, potentially, pursuing master's of divinity study en route to eventual ordination as minister of the Word. All the offices—minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate—are equal in dignity and honor. However, they are not the same as professional career tracks.

The Candidacy Committee does not believe that ministry associate experience by itself prepares an individual to be a minister of the Word. In that sense, the office of ministry associate is not a route or stepping stone to minister of the Word. At the same time ministry associates need to be encouraged to continue their learning and formation through M.Div. studies and, eventually, Article 6 ordination as minister of the Word.

### C. Challenges

In the Candidacy Committee discussions, a number of challenges and questions have been identified relative to the development and effective utilization of the office of ministry associate. While the committee is not nearly ready to offer answers to all these questions, we feel it beneficial to the church to make these questions explicit. They will give focus to our future discussion and work.

1. How do we move from the excellent list of *qualifications* found in Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a to *educational and training guidelines* that ensure qualification for ministry? Can we come up with educational and training guidelines that ensure basic learning outcomes but are flexible and local or regional?
2. Do classes have the necessary information to make a judgment as to whether a proposed ministry associate position meets the requirement of pastoral extension as set forth by Synod 2001? If not, how can the Candidacy Committee assist and equip classes and synodical deputies in making informed determinations regarding the office of ministry associate?
3. Do we need to distinguish between ministry associates in general and those who lead congregations and preach? Currently the Church Order distinguishes only to the degree that Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a lists as one element in the classical examination “where applicable, presentation of a sermon.” Does the principle of proportionality drive us to make such a distinction, and then to create and implement core educational and training requirements, to be implemented classically, for any ministry associate who leads a congregation and preaches? Can the Candidacy Committee provide these resources, and will classes utilize them?
4. Currently synodical deputies approve the ministry associate position only but not the person. The rationale for the latter is that the person's ministry is not denominational in scope. Given the increased use of ministry associates and the reality that ministry associates do not, in fact, remain in one local church but often move from one church and classis to another, does a ministry associate's ordination, perhaps initial ordination, warrant the approval of synodical deputies?

5. How are we to think about Church Order protections for ministry associates? Currently, ministry associates are probably best understood as at-will employees. The obligations a congregation takes on when it calls a minister of the Word presume thorough education and screening of that minister. With no educational and training requirements for ministry associates, how reasonable is it to expect congregations to take on such obligations? Is there a set of understandings or mutual obligations that would be appropriate to the office of ministry associate?

On a related matter, a general principle in CRC polity is that the level at which someone is appointed to a position (e.g., classis) is the level at which someone must be removed. Currently classis approves the appointment of a ministry associate, but a local congregation can remove one with no involvement of classis. Should the removal of a ministry associate require classical approval?

6. Are we headed for a ministerial leadership system divided between majority culture congregations with ministers of the Word and ethnic minority congregations with ministry associates? Is this problematic? If so, why? If not, why not? Are there other unintended consequences of the decisions we are making that need to be addressed now rather than later?
7. How does classis monitor, guide, and support the ongoing training and development of ministry associates? Since there is no formal program of preparation for all ministry associates, how do classes help ministry associates develop and implement individual programs of lifelong learning? In the case of non-formal learning, the Candidacy Committee will be offering resources in the near future. In the case of formal learning, can classis financially assist ministry associates in their pursuit of theological education?

### III. Ministry associates and Church Order Article 23-d

Synod 2007 made the following recommendation with respect to ministry associates serving in organized congregations:

Ministry associates may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations have economic need and are from a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical. (The former Article 23-d becomes 23-e.)

#### *Grounds:*

1. This arrangement provides a path into ministry in organized congregations for individuals entering the CRC who do not have a master of divinity degree or do not meet the other standards required for Church Order Article 6, 7, or 8 ordination to minister of the Word.
2. This arrangement preserves Articles 6, 7, and 8 as the normal routes to pastoral ministry in the CRC.
3. This arrangement helps the denomination address the significant current and anticipated need for pastors to serve in our churches.
4. This arrangement has already been a blessing to a number of congregations in the Christian Reformed Church.

*(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 664-65)*

Synod further declared this addition to Church Order Article 23: “to be a substantial change requiring adoption by Synod 2008” (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 665).

Synodical deputies and other members of various classes have asked the Candidacy Committee for clarification of this decision, specifically the terms *economic need* and *ministry context*, so that it can be implemented with consistency and fairness. In order to address these concerns, the Candidacy Committee recommends to synod:

A. That synod adopt the Synod 2007 decision referenced above with the deletion of the phrase “have economic need and” so that the adopted decision would read as follows:

Ministry associates may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations are in a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical.

*Grounds:*

1. Economic need is one aspect of ministry context and should be considered as a part of the broader consideration of ministry context.
2. This change would retain synod’s intent to include a consideration of economic need without linking “economic need” with ministry contexts other than the dominant culture.
3. This change is not substantive and would not delay synodical adoption of this recommendation for another year.

*Note:* Grounds for the original recommendation are unchanged.

B. That synod adopt the following guideline for congregations, classes, and synodical deputies in deciding whether it is appropriate to call a ministry associate to a particular organized congregation:

The ministry context is ordinarily one in which cultural differences (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, educational, language) between the congregation and its ministry context on the one hand, and the dominant culture of the denomination as expressed in the seminary, other leadership development entities, and broader denominational life on the other hand (a) present significant obstacles to raising up indigenous leadership in ways that are sustainable by the respective congregations and communities, and (b) have resulted in limited- or non-availability of competent indigenous leaders trained for ministry via one of the prescribed routes for ministry of the Word.

*Grounds:*

1. This guideline clarifies the points of reference in the overture that guided the advisory committee and synod in its decision.
2. Congregations, classes, and synodical deputies need this guideline to implement this synodical decision with consistency and fairness.

C. That synod place these guidelines in the Church Order Supplement, Article 23-d.

#### **IV. General reflections**

As the Candidacy Committee continues its work, it finds itself challenged by the task. In the few short years since the creation of the Candidacy Committee, much progress has been made and also many new challenges have been identified.

The Candidacy Committee is enthusiastic about developing modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) programs and has been pleased by a number of high-quality proposals that it has received. We are working to develop effective relationships with leaders at the local and regional level. A number of regions are beginning to develop Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLTs) to aid in the processing of candidates for ministry. These teams will be invaluable in the planning of a learning covenant with candidates, planning a package of financial support, and recruiting and encouraging candidates.

The Candidacy Committee is grateful for the opportunity to serve the church, and the committee covets the support and partnership of the broader church community.

#### **V. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Thea Leunk and Rev. David Koll when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot appoint Rev. Peter Choi to the Candidacy Committee, replacing retiring committee member Rev. Emmett Harrison as of July 1, 2008, and that synod thank Rev. Harrison for his work.

C. That synod approve the change to item 8 in the mandate of the Candidacy Committee so that it reads as follows: "Provide support and accountability throughout the preparatory process for women whose council or classis does not support women in ordained ministry."

D. That synod note the appointment of Rev. David Koll as the director of candidacy.

E. That synod take note of the Candidacy Committee discussion regarding the position of ministry associates.

F. That synod approve the following actions relative to Church Order Article 23:

1. That synod adopt the Synod 2007 decision by deleting the phrase "have economic need and" so that the adopted decision would read as follows:

Ministry associates may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations are in a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical.



*Grounds:*

- a. Economic need is one aspect of ministry context and should be considered as a part of the broader consideration of ministry context.
- b. This change would retain synod's intent to include a consideration of economic need without linking "economic need" with ministry contexts other than the dominant culture.
- c. This change is not substantive and would not delay synodical adoption of this recommendation for another year.

*Note:* Grounds for the original recommendation are unchanged.

2. That synod adopt the following guideline for congregations, classes, and synodical deputies in deciding whether it is appropriate to call a ministry associate to a particular organized congregation:

The ministry context is ordinarily one in which cultural differences (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, educational, language) between the congregation and its ministry context on the one hand, and the dominant culture of the denomination as expressed in the seminary, other leadership development entities, and broader denominational life on the other hand (a) present significant obstacles to raising up indigenous leadership in ways that are sustainable by the respective congregations and communities, and (b) have resulted in limited- or non-availability of competent indigenous leaders trained for ministry via one of the prescribed routes for ministry of the Word.

*Grounds:*

- a. This guideline clarifies the points of reference in the overture that guided the advisory committee and synod in its decision.
  - b. Congregations, classes, and synodical deputies need this guideline to implement this synodical decision with consistency and fairness.
3. That synod place these guidelines in the Church Order Supplement, Article 23-d.

Candidacy Committee  
David R. Koll, director



### I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are Rev. Eugene Schemper, chair; Dr. James A. De Jong; Mrs. Angie Ploegstra; Mr. William Sytsma; and Dr. Richard Harms (*ex officio*), secretary.

### II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard H. 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, library assistant; Ms. Boukje Leegwater; and Ms. Melanie Vander Wal departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; student assistants Ms. Dana Verhulst and Ms. Cyndi Feenstra; and volunteers Dr. Henry Ippel, Rev. Henry DeMots, Rev. Leonard Sweetman, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Mr. Ralph Haan, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, Mrs. Willene De Groot, Mrs. Marlene Post, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

### III. Archival work during 2007

Among the collections opened to research were the papers of Dr. Robert Recker, minister and professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, which detail his ministry in and teaching of missions; the papers of Dr. Carl Kromminga, Sr., minister and professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, that contain much on the history of the denomination, his writing for *The Young Calvinist*, and the various courses during a 36-year teaching career. Also processed were the papers of the following former Calvin College faculty members: Walter Lagerwey, a leading educator of Dutch in the United States at the college level; Bernard Fridsma, internationally acknowledged scholar in Frisian studies; and Thedford Dirkse, dealing with his seminal work on battery storage. We also opened the professional correspondence of West Michigan artist Reynold Weidenaar, the files of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, the minutes of Chicago Christian College, the minutes of Elim Christian School, and the records from the Christian Reformed Church's Office of Race Relations.

The archives took in approximately 120 cubic feet of records from sixty donors during the year. Particularly noteworthy among these accessions are the papers of Rev. John Westervelt (1857-1951), who began his ministry in 1880 in the True Protestant Dutch Reformed Church, which joined the CRCNA in 1890 as Classis Hackensack. In addition, we received the papers of several seminary and college emeriti, official records from denominational, seminary, and college offices, and a number of denominational ministries.

Several volunteers continue the indexing of our collection of family histories and cross-indexing of the surnames of women from the nineteenth century in those family histories. Indexing of *The Banner* vital records notices continues, with three volunteers now having completed approximately two-thirds of the years 1985-1994 and a fourth volunteer having begun the

1975-1984 span. Work continues on collating and keying into a database the information on post-World War II Dutch immigrants in Canada. Translation of minutes from Manhattan, Montana; Bemis, South Dakota; Birnamwood, Wisconsin; and Prairie View, Kansas, Christian Reformed churches and from CRCNA Classis Grand Rapids West continue. Noteworthy among our translators is Rev. Henry DeMots, the oldest living minister in the denomination.

With funding provided by the CRCNA, we redesigned the CRC ministers database and keyed in new data to allow improved statistical analyses of trends such as ministerial retention rates, reasons for leaving the parish ministry, reasons for leaving ministry, and so forth.

During the past twelve months, our website has received an average of 43 visits per day. The visitors were from 1,859 cities in 94 countries. The top ten cities of visitor origin are Grand Rapids, Amsterdam, Detroit, Kalamazoo, Rotterdam, Chicago, Allendale, Dublin, Seattle, and New York. By continent 69.5 percent come from the Americas, 28 percent from Europe, one percent each from Oceania and Asia, and one-half of one percent from Africa.

#### IV. Publications

The Archives published its twenty-sixth annual 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. In cooperation with the Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, *Origins* produced a biography of Rev. Henry J. Kuiper, by Dr. James A. De Jong. We compiled the membership records of the short-lived (January to December 1893) Rilland, Colorado, Christian Reformed Church near present-day Alamosa, Colorado available at [http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family\\_history\\_resources/Rilland\\_church.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/Rilland_church.htm).

#### V. Recognition

A. The committee acknowledges the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2008:

73 years	Elco H. Oostendorp
70 years	Henry DeMots (who at 97 is our oldest minister)
69 years	John Blankespoor
68 years	Lambert Doezema Repko W. Popma
67 years	Eugene Bradford Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom Garrett H. Vande Riet
66 years	John A. Botting
65 years	Bastiaan Nederlof
64 years	Paul Han John H. Olthof

63 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
62 years	Henry Bajema David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
61 years	John A. De Kruyter Jacob Hasper Herman Minnema Bernard E. Pekelder Clarence Van Ens
60 years	Peter Ipema Carl G. Kromminga, Sr. Peter M. Macaskill Howard B. Spaan
55 years	Harry G. Arnold Jacob P. Boonstra Peter W. Brouwer Bernard Byma Gerrit B. Dokter Jerrien J. Gunnink Herman Hoekstra William A. Huyser Bassam M. Madany John Morren Bernard J. Niemeyer Kenneth R. Slager John W. Van Stempvoort Theodore Verseput Andrew Zylstra
50 years	Hessel Bouma, Jr. Raymond G. Brinks Ralph A. Bruxvoort Willard H. De Vries Sidney Draayer Roger S. Greenway Donald J. Griffioen Kenneth L. Havert Allan H. Jongsma Henry T. Karsten John Koopmans Andrew Kuyvenhoven Vernon Luchies Theodore Medema Edward P. Meyer Theodore Minnema

Alvin A. Mulder  
 Bernard W. Mulder  
 Gerardus Nonnekes  
 Garrett H. Stoutmeyer  
 Leverne K. Tanis  
 Thomas Vanden Bosch  
 Jack L. Vander Laan  
 Arie G. Van Eek  
 Donald W. Van Gent  
 Paul H. Vruwink

B. We report the following anniversaries of ministries during 2008:

125 years, 1883-2008	Borculo, MI Lucas, MI New Holland, SD Overisel, MI Platte, SD
100 years, 1908-2008	Highland, IN – First Ireton, IA Randolph, WI – First Stoney Plain, AB – Hope
75 years, 1933-2008	Battle Creek, MI – River Walk Community
50 years, 1958-2008	Cambridge, ON – Maranatha Dunnville, ON – Bethel Fort Lauderdale, FL – New Hope Community Halifax, NS – All Nations Lansing, IL – Bethel Ottawa, ON – Calvary Portage, MI – Prairie Edge Sheboygan, WI – Calvin Whitinsville, MA – Fairlawn Wyoming, MI – Rogers Heights
25 years, 1983-2008	Anaheim, CA – Latin American Champaign, IL – Hessel Park Church Rock, NM Edmonton, AB – Fellowship Fairfield, CA Jacksonville, FL – Baymeadows Community Nashville, TN – Faith Tohatchi, NM – First Navajo

## VI. Reminders

We urge congregations that have or soon will observe anniversaries to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, videotapes, photographs, and so forth) to the Archives. This is a convenient means for keeping a duplicate set of such materials in a secure location.

Of the 839 organized congregations, 665 (79 percent) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. This total represents an increase of 20 congregations from last year. Due to the ongoing and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee again strongly urges the remaining 173 congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy of their important records that will be stored in an environmentally secure location. No one, including archives staff, is allowed to look at these microfilms without the written permission of the individual church council. We commend Classes Arizona, B.C. North-West, Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland, whose congregations have all had their records microfilmed.

## VII. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Richard H. Harms when matters pertaining to the Historical Committee come before synod.
- B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the appointment of Rev. Lugene Schemper to a second three-year term.
- C. The committee again reports the frequency of individual congregations' being unable to locate significant portions of council, elders', and deacons' minutes (all absolutely necessary for both congregational and legal purposes) and asks that synod emphasize to 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 the complete set of all minutes when they begin their terms.
- D. That synod instruct congregations to send all non-current membership information to the Archives. The Archives receives frequent inquiries about baptismal records, particularly those from discontinued ministries.
- E. That synod remind the stated clerks of each classis to send all the records of discontinued ministries to the Archives for safekeeping.

Historical Committee

James A. De Jong

Richard H. Harms (*ex officio*), secretary

Angie Ploegstra

Lugene Schemper

William Sytsma

**I. Introduction**

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) considers it a privilege to represent the CRC in its ecumenical relationships. Such relationships tie the CRC to the larger Reformed family and to other Christian communities throughout the world. Relationships among churches are, in most respects, first personal and later become institutional. Interchurch relationships are developed in various ways, but the most common venues are joint meetings and consultations, attending the same ecumenical gatherings, sharing information and resources, and exchanging visits and fraternal representatives.

The agenda of the IRC tends to ebb and flow in relationship to what is happening in the ecumenical sphere of the church. The IRC is bringing several important matters to Synod 2008, and it is our aim to provide synod with the necessary background and rationale for the recommendations being proposed.

**II. Membership**

The members of the IRC for the current year ending June 30, 2008, are:

- From Canada: Ms. Louisa Bruinsma (2008 – 2nd term); Rev. Carel Geleynse (2008 – 1st term); Dr. William T. Koopmans, chairman (2009 – 1st term); Dr. Bertha Mook (2008 – 2nd term); Dr. James R. Payton (2010 – 2nd term); and Rev. Peter Slofstra (2010 – 1st term).
- From the United States: Rev. Pedro Aviles (2010 – 1st term); Dr. Emily Brink (2010 – 1st term); Rev. Marvin J. Hofman, vice chairman (2008 – 1st term); Dr. Carol Rottman (2009 – 1st term); Dr. David M. Rylaarsdam (2009 – 2nd term); and Mr. Abraham Vreeke (2008 – 2nd term).

The IRC has for several years followed the following procedure with reference to the selection of leadership, meeting frequency, and meeting location. This method of operating was proposed to Synod 2000 and, therefore, was written into the synodical record.

- 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.

During the course of the last year, the IRC has been considering some changes in the matters listed above. The present chairperson Dr. William T. Koopmans was elected to serve as the chairman of the IRC in favor of an annual rotation of chair. The IRC also decided to meet “as a committee of the whole” rather than in two subcommittees (Canada and the United States) for a trial period of one year (to be evaluated in November 2008). The reason for this change is to reflect more fully that the IRC is the ecumenical relations committee for the whole of the binational CRC. The IRC also judged that the committee could function adequately with ten members (instead of

the authorized twelve). Since three members are scheduled to retire from the committee in 2008, the IRC decided to achieve the down-sizing by way of replacing the retiring three members with just one nominee. If a ten-member committee becomes the norm for the IRC, then the selection of committee members would follow the guidelines as described in the Appendix to this report.

These changes are reported here for reasons of clarity and transparency. The IRC discussed whether it is necessary to formally propose the changes to Synod 2009 (if IRC's evaluation in November 2008 is such that the changes are desired to be permanent) since these details were written into the decision of Synod 2000. If these functional details are within the prerogatives of the IRC, then reporting them to synod as information may be adequate. The IRC will continue to discuss these changes and, of course, welcomes the advice of Synod 2008.

### **III. 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 has a relationship or is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Reformed Church in America (RCA) annual synod in Pella, Iowa, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.
2. To the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) meeting of synod, Rev. George Young.
3. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) annual assembly, Dr. Philip V. De Jonge.

#### *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. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Ms. Louisa Bruinsma and Rev. Bruce G. Adema serve as the CRCNA's representatives on the board of directors of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC).
3. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra and Dr. Peter Borgdorff serve as the CRCNA's representatives to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).
4. Rev. Bruce G. Adema serves on the board of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

### **IV. 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. Most of the present work of the REC is conducted by its executive committee, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff is presently serving as the president of the REC and chairman of the REC executive committee.

It was reported to Synods 2006 and 2007 that a joint communication had been received from the president of the REC and the president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) announcing the proposed formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), an organization that will be formed by taking over the functions of both the REC and WARC. Synod 2006 noted with gratitude and appreciation the proposal to form the WCRC as proposed by the WARC and the REC cooperation committee. The grounds synod adopted as the rationale for its support were

- a. The unity of the church, especially those in the Reformed tradition, is enhanced by this development.
- b. Uniting together is a better testimony to the world than remaining separate.
- c. The confessional basis proposed for the World Reformed Communion will be inviting for others to join the new organization.
- d. The basis for the World Reformed Communion is consistent with the confessional basis of the CRC in that WRC will be based on "the Word of the triune God, incarnated in Jesus Christ, the foundation of the Church, and written in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This communion embodies the Reformed identity articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and continued in the life and witness of the Reformed community."
- e. In times of financial constraint, combining the witness of WARC and REC is responsible financial stewardship.

*(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 666)*

More recent developments are that the unifying of the REC and WARC is now scheduled for June 2010. The Christian Reformed Church has been asked to be the official host church for this Unifying General Council meeting to be held on the campus of Calvin College June 18-28, 2010. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA formally approved the request that the CRC function as the official host for the Unifying General Council meeting with the understanding that other North American WARC member churches will co-host the event with us. This Unifying General Council will be composed of some 600 delegates and is likely to draw additional observers and guests for an expected attendance of 1,000 representatives from all parts of the world. It is an honor for the CRC to be asked to host this gathering. Planning is already under way and will intensify in the coming months.

#### *B. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)*

The CRCNA is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The EFC, not unlike the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the United States, 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 the government on current issues of interest and concern.

#### *C. Canadian Council of Churches (CCC)*

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). 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



the CRC representatives make the CRC's 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*

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) gathers its members twice each year instead of its previous single annual meeting format. In addition to these membership meetings, the CRC cooperates with the NAE Commissions in the area of chaplaincy ministries (especially as that relates to endorsement of chaplains' issues). From time to time, the CRC is asked to participate in other NAE initiatives.

*E. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)*

The CRC's membership in WARC is now several years old, and there has been regular contact with the general secretary of WARC throughout the year. Part of that contact was occasioned by the CRC's support for the Mission in Unity project. That project has now been transitioned, and participation with WARC in the programmatic sense has now been assumed by Christian Reformed World Missions. CRC representatives are also invited to participate in various WARC discussions from time to time. It is fair to say that the CRC's relationship within WARC is developing and wholesome.

When the CRC decided to become a participant in WARC, it was also decided that the relationship would be thoroughly evaluated in 2008. It is the judgment of the IRC that such an evaluation is not required at this time in view of the development to support the formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The IRC requests that Synod 2008 concur in that judgment.

The regional configuration of WARC is expressed through the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC). Rev. Bruce G. Adema serves on the executive committee of CANAAC, and both he and Ms. Louisa Bruinisma are delegated to attend the regional assembly the latter part of February 2008 in Guyana.

*F. Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (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 U.S.A. (CCT-USA). The present participants in CCT-USA represent five families of churches as follows: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, historic Protestant, evangelicals/Pentecostals, and racial/ethnic. The most recent meeting of CCT-USA was held in January 2008 in Baltimore, Maryland. This meeting was only the second annual meeting of CCT-USA.

Synod 2004 authorized the IRC to participate in this new ecumenical organization. The IRC will continue to monitor the CRC's involvement, provide reports to synod, and prepare a review of our relationship with the CCT-USA for Synod 2010.

**V. Bilateral relationships—international**

The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the former Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) were integrally linked as churches since the 1890s when the GKN was formed. Intellectual, spiritual, and

financial assistance flowed freely from the Netherlands to North America. For many years, members of the CRC and the GKN on either side of the Atlantic Ocean felt at home in each other's churches. Sometimes the relationship was referred to as mother-daughter and other times as sister-sister. This highlights the family connectedness that has existed in our relationship.

It is no secret that the relationship between the CRC and the GKN also experienced some strains and tensions. At first, the tension was related to a difference of opinion on biblical hermeneutics and, later, the tension increased when the GKN permitted gays and lesbians living in committed relationships to serve as officebearers in GKN churches. The provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship were gradually reduced from the former six (full relationship) to two (partial relationship) in 1996 (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520).

A significant factor that has affected more recent discussions is the formation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) in 2004. The CRC's relationship is in reality now with the PCN since the GKN as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship no longer exists. CRC representatives have continued to be in regular conversation with representatives of the PCN over the years, and both denominations continue to be active in the ecumenical environment of the REC and WARC. The PCN has repeatedly stated that it wishes to be in a bilateral relationship and in unrestricted fellowship with the CRC. Since the restrictions were imposed by the CRC, the IRC judges that it is time for Synod 2008 to make a definitive decision concerning our relationship to the PCN.

The IRC is also motivated to recommend definitive action by synod because the CRC adopted a revised Ecumenical Charter in 2006 which, at its core, redefines the nature of ecclesiastical fellowship. The Ecumenical Charter adopted by synod reflects the significant changes in the ecumenical landscape in which we presently live. As the introduction to the charter states:

There was a time when ecumenical relations were initiated and maintained primarily with those who shared the same faith, viewpoints, confessions, and theological heritage. In the Christian Reformed Church, that meant that our church-to-church relations were initiated and developed with churches that were the most like the CRC in significant respects. Initially the ecumenical contacts for the CRC were exclusively with denominations in the Reformed tradition who shared a viewpoint that ecumenical partners assume a corporate responsibility for keeping each other confessionally Reformed. Not only did synods consult each other on important theological issues, but the one partner could call to account the other partner for deviations or practices that the one found to be objectionable.

The CRC has learned that such forms of ecumenical relationships come with risks. The requirement that ecumenical partners think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC can soon make the circle of ecumenical relationships very small. Furthermore, such a demand for similarity of viewpoint exposes the CRC to the risk of being perceived as being theologically arrogant. That risk is real because the demand for a similarity of viewpoint sets up a dynamic of monitoring and control instead of the development of healthy relationships with ecumenical partners. . . . [The CRC itself became the victim of] such monitoring and controlling behavior when the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) expelled the CRC from its membership because NAPARC judged that the CRC had moved outside of the pale of theological and biblical integrity.

The changed landscape of ecumenical relationships has also caused the CRC to alter its ecumenical practices. . . . [We are] less insistent than we once

were that our partners understand Christian, or even Reformed, truth in the same way as the CRC. This change in attitude allowed the CRC to become a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC).

Since, with the formation of the PCN the GKN ceased to exist, the IRC believes that the restrictions placed on the relationship with the GKN should not remain or be transferred to our relationship with the PCN. The restrictions imposed on the GKN relationship in 1996 became, in effect, null and void when the PCN took on its new existence.

It is a matter of record that previous synods extensively debated the merits of a continuing relationship with our sister church in any form versus the option of terminating that relationship. Concerns about scriptural interpretations, ethical pronouncements, and life-style practices, especially as that relates to same-sex relationships, have been prominent in the CRC discussions to date. It has been a difficult discussion both for the CRC and more recently for the PCN. It is clear that there are differences in thinking and practice between the CRC and the PCN, and the IRC is not denying that to be so. At the same time, the IRC, in trying to come to grips with the issues involved, asked itself whether the issues on which we differ are really the right questions in determining whether to be in an ecclesiastical relationship. In other words, is the essence of ecumenical relations to be found in agreement on all important issues and viewpoints? No one stumbles over small differences, but what margin of difference is acceptable? Will the differences that remain between the PCN and the CRC override all other considerations? The IRC believes that it is time to infuse a different perspective into the discussion. The IRC recommended to Synod 2006 that this matter be resolved, but synod decided to leave matters status quo at that time for later consideration. The grounds advanced in 2006 were as follows:

1. The PCN is a church in the Reformed tradition with many historical, cultural, and familial connections to the CRC. Maintaining, and indeed restoring, full ecclesiastical fellowship is desirable. The IRC believes that not restoring or terminating the CRC's relationship with the PCN would be a severe setback in our ecumenical ventures.
2. We are in multilateral relationship with the PCN through both WARC and REC. It would seem inconsistent to terminate a bilateral relationship while continuing in a multilateral relationship.
3. The PCN has repeatedly asked that the CRC restore the PCN to *full* ecclesiastical fellowship because the restricted fellowship imposed by Synods 1983 and 1996 is painful and unproductive.
4. It is clear that some positions taken by the PCN are in conflict with positions taken by the CRC. There is nothing in the present Ecumenical Charter that requires churches in ecclesiastical relationship to be in total agreement, even on important issues. The CRC can maintain its integrity on important issues without rejecting another church for fellowship.
5. The proposed revised Ecumenical Charter of the CRC also does not require that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC have and maintain every position the CRC adopts for itself. Neither is the CRC obliged to endorse or agree with every position taken by a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.
6. If the CRC were to terminate its relationship to the PCN, then the only remaining relationship in all of Europe would be the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC).

7. The CRC itself has experienced the pain of ecclesiastical exclusion when the member churches of NAPARC insisted that the CRC conform to their position on women serving in ecclesiastical office. The IRC believes that we must not act in similar fashion.

*(Agenda for Synod 2006, pp. 268-69)*

The IRC now recommends the following:

- A. That synod declare the restrictions placed on the ecclesiastical relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) in 1996 to be withdrawn when the GKN became part of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN).

*Ground:* Such restrictions are not transferable to the PCN because it is, in effect, a new denomination.

- B. That synod approve a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN).

*Grounds:*

1. The PCN confesses the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions.
2. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ, and especially with those churches with whom we share a common history and confessional heritage; it follows that the CRC can value and benefit from fellowship with the PCN even though, as with every other ecumenical relationship the CRC maintains, there remain differences between the churches involved.
3. The CRC has an ecumenical opportunity to be in fellowship with the PCN as it seeks to be a Reformed witness in a radically secular European environment and is also seeking spiritual renewal within its own fellowship.
4. The PCN expresses its fervent desire to be in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.
5. The historical character of the CRC's relationship to the GKN, which in spirit is continued in the PCN, is important to the ecumenical life of the CRC and lends credibility to our own witness as expressed in the CRC's ecumenical charter.
6. It is the expressed wish of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), an evangelical and more conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, that the CRC be in fellowship with the PCN.

## **VI. 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.

### *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.

Cooperation with the RCA and its programmatic offices continues to expand. Within the last year a partnership agreement was signed between CRWRC and the RCA office of disaster response; the Faith Alive Christian Resources partnership continues to develop and is working well; the CRC is using the RCA Study Guide for consideration of the Belhar Confession; and the RCA recently endorsed participation in the Sea to Sea bicycle tour. These references do not include the numerous cooperative ventures conducted by classes and congregations throughout both denominations.

### *C. Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)*

The IRC continues to be in dialogue with the PCC. This is a growing relationship and one that has promise for the future. Consideration is being given to formalizing that relationship to churches in dialogue status. That possibility deserves an additional comment.

Officially the ecumenical charter has two categories: the first is "churches in ecclesiastical fellowship"; the second is "churches in dialogue." However, within the second category there is a sub-category. Among the many Christian churches presumed to be in the dialogue designation, there are those with whom conversations are presently under way. It is synod's prerogative to designate the churches whose "in dialogue" status is elevated to a more formal discussion level. In the case of the conversations with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, it is likely that a recommendation to advance that relationship to formalized status is forthcoming to Synod 2009.

## **VII. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)**

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.

Several meetings of the dialogue partners have been held since September 2003. Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and the Most Reverend Patrick Cooney, Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan, were selected

as co-chairs of the multi-year discussion. The CRC participants are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Ms. Susan Rozeboom, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

The discussion about the Eucharist has been completed, and the official reports of that discussion have been published in booklet form under the title *The Lord's Supper and the Roman Catholic Mass – A Discussion on Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism*. The booklet is available on the webpage of the CRCNA at [www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm).

The present focus of the dialogue is on the sacrament of baptism. Several preliminary documents have been prepared, but the IRC has not yet had opportunity to review them. If that consideration happens before the supplementary report to synod is prepared, we may be able to include a further report for synod's consideration. If adequate time is not available, then it will have to await Synod 2009.

### **VIII. The Belhar Confession**

Synod 2007 instructed the IRC as follows with reference to the Belhar Confession process:

That synod encourage the ongoing work of the Interchurch Relations Committee to inform and engage the churches concerning the Belhar Confession and the issues raised by it through: (1) a greater dissemination of the Belhar Confession to the congregations in order to familiarize the denomination with it and the issues raised by it, and (2) regional level dialogues to be initiated by the Interchurch Relations Committee as part of their process of expediting a recommendation to Synod 2009.

*(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 592)*

By the time Synod 2008 convenes, most, if not all, of the regional discussions will have been held. The study guide for congregational use has been made available to every congregation, pastor, and church-education staff person throughout the denomination. An update on general reactions to the Belhar Confession will be provided to synod's advisory committee when Synod 2008 convenes.

### **IX. Nominations for membership**

Ms. Louisa Bruinsma, Dr. Bertha Mook, and Mr. Abe Vreeke are completing their final term (six years) of service and faithfully served the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. The IRC recommends that Rev. Carel Geleynse and Rev. Marvin Hofman be appointed to a second three-year term (2008-2011).

To fill the one position on the committee, the IRC is pleased to present the nomination of Ms. Rebecca Warren of Edmonton, Alberta, for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2008.

Ms. Rebecca Warren is a member of Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. However, since moving to Edmonton, Ms. Warren attends Fellowship CRC there and is involved in that congregation's ministry. She is the coordinator of student programs at The King's University College, where she plans and facilitates student retreats, orientations, and other periodic events that contribute to an overall lively and positive campus culture. Ms. Warren has also served as the outreach program director for Restorers, Inc., where she was involved as a director for Healthy Marriages / Healthy Relationships, Financial Freedom, and IDA (Individual Development Account) programs for Restorers, a nonprofit Christian community development



organization. Ms. Warren has also worked as a senior editor for McGraw-Hill Children's publishing and as an administrator of the Festival of Faith and Writing and Young Author's Festival at Calvin College; she has written curriculum for the Classroom Connect online site; and she instructed students in their writing processes at the Indiana University Kelly School of Business. Ms. Warren has published articles in *The Edmonton Journal*, *The Banner*, the *Herald-Times*, and the *Grand Rapids Press*.

## **X. The IRC Hospitality Committee**

The IRC has appointed a hospitality committee for fraternal delegates and observers to Synod 2008. IRC members Dr. Emily Brink, Dr. William T. Koopmans, Rev. Marvin J. Hofman and Dr. Carol Rottman have agreed to serve. Rev. Bruce G. Adema and Dr. Peter Borgdorff will assist the committee as needed.

## **XI. Recommendations**

A. That Dr. William T. Koopmans (president) and Dr. Peter Borgdorff be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the Interchurch Relations Committee are being discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Ms. Louisa Bruinsma, Dr. Bertha Mook, and Mr. Abe Vreeke for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod note the approval of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to host the Unifying General Council meeting at Calvin College June 18-28, 2010.

D. That synod concur in the Interchurch Relations Committee's judgment that a review of the CRC's membership in WARC is not required at this time in view of the proposed formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches that was endorsed by Synod 2006.

E. That synod

1. Declare that the restrictions placed on the ecclesiastical relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) in 1996 to be withdrawn when the GKN became part of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN).

*Ground:* Such restrictions are not transferable to the PCN because it is, in effect, a new denomination.

2. Approve a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN).

*Grounds:*

- a. The PCN confesses the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions.
- b. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ, and especially with those churches with whom we share a common history and confessional heritage; it follows that the CRC can value and benefit from fellowship with the PCN even though, as with every other ecumenical relationship

the CRC maintains, there remain differences between the churches involved.

- c. The CRC has an ecumenical opportunity to be in fellowship with the PCN as it seeks to be a Reformed witness in a radically secular European environment and is also seeking spiritual renewal within its own fellowship.
- d. The PCN expresses its fervent desire to be in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.
- e. The historical character of the CRC's relationship to the GKN, which in spirit is continued in the PCN, is important to the ecumenical life of the CRC and lends credibility to our own witness as expressed in the CRC's ecumenical charter.
- f. It is the expressed wish of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), an evangelical and more conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, that the CRC be in fellowship with the PCN.

F. That synod, by way of the printed ballot, appoint Ms. Rebecca Warren to serve on the IRC for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2008.

Interchurch Relations Committee  
Peter Borgdorff, ecumenical officer

## **Appendix**

### **IRC Membership Distribution**

- 1. The IRC will be a ten-member (plus ex-officio members) standing committee of synod beginning July 1, 2008.
- 2. That five members be from Canada and five members be from the United States with every effort made toward the following regional balance:
  - a. That two Canadian members be elected from the Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, and Lake Superior.
  - b. That three Canadian members be elected from the classes east of Classis Lake Superior.
  - c. That one U.S. member be elected from the Eastern regions.
  - d. That two U.S. members be elected from the Great Lakes regions.
  - e. That two U.S. members be elected from the regions west of the Mississippi River.
- 3. The preference is to strive for balancing the membership of IRC as follows:
  - a. That five members be ordained clergy.
  - b. That five members be from the general membership of the church.
  - c. That five members be female in gender.
  - d. That not less than two members be of ethnic minority communities.
- 4. The IRC shall meet not less than two times per year and may schedule a third meeting if the agenda warrants.



### I. Brief overview

In 2007 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and processed twenty-five sermons that are available on the denominational website (go to [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and select "Resources"). We are pleased to report that the reading sermons section of the site receives in excess of 2,000 hits per month. We cannot know, however, how many times a sermon is actually used for a worship service. Informal conversations within the denomination indicate that smaller and more remote churches are still making use of this denominational resource. In addition, having the sermons and liturgies available on the Internet gives the larger body of Christ access to these resources. We are exploring options to ensure that all congregations within our denomination are aware of this service provided on our denominational website.

We give thanks to God for the faithful service that Rev. Gordon Pols has given our committee. Rev. Pols recently retired and resigned from the committee. Committee members continue to solicit sermons from CRC pastors all across the denomination in the United States and Canada.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Richard deLange (2009), chairman and secretary; Rev. John Kerssies (2008); and Rev. Paul Stadt (2008). We note that since this service of providing sermons has gone strictly electronic (no longer printing booklets), we currently need four committee members in comparison with formerly needing six. We feel this is adequate in order for us to do our work and, unless synod instructs us otherwise, we feel confident that we can fulfill our mandate with a committee of four. The committee requests that synod elect the following new member to the Sermons for Reading Services Committee:

*Rev. Kenneth F. Benjamins* is pastor of Hope CRC in Brantford, Ontario. He is a graduate of Redeemer University College and received his master's of divinity from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Benjamins has served on the classical Home Missions board, the classis restructuring committee, and the classis interim committee, currently serving as its chair. As senior pastor of his church, he acts as chair of the consistory. He states, "Preaching is important to me. It is the heart of the church. The church deserves adequate preaching resources."

### 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 by way of the ballot approves the appointment of Rev. Kenneth F. Benjamins for a three-year term and reappoint both Rev. Paul Stadt and Rev. John Kerssies for a second three-year term.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee  
Richard deLange, chairman/secretary  
John Kerssies  
Paul Stadt

# DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

Greetings from the Dordt College community. We are thankful for the Christian Reformed Church's faithful support of Christian higher education and for the long-time support that Dordt College has received from churches in the denomination. The partnership has strengthened us in many ways, and we believe it has also strengthened churches. One example of this is the annual Day of Encouragement that draws several hundred people to campus each February to share insights on how to serve in local church ministries.

It has not been uncommon over the years for people to remark that Dordt College is very intentional, to use an overused phrase, in trying to spell out its Reformed Kuyperian vision. This year marks another step in the honing of that vision. Following a multiyear reassessment of our curriculum, a new Core Program was approved and will be put into place next fall. This new program spells out in curricular form what our earlier Educational Framework document had outlined. It is based on four curricular coordinates that we believe give our students the background needed for addressing the world's needs: *religious orientation* (every inch of this world belongs to God), *creational structure* (the world is of one piece), *cultural development* (we develop it for good or for evil), and *contemporary response* (we live and work in his world as Christ's disciples).

The new Core Program marks a conscious shift to a holistic way of looking at knowledge that is defined less by disciplines and more by students as whole people with responsibilities toward the world in which they live. It is interdisciplinary, giving students a strong context in which to do their specialized studies in their major program. And it tries to deepen students' grasp of a Reformed perspective.

This curriculum, we pray, will give our students an even better background for living lives of service in Christ's kingdom once they graduate, begin their careers and families, and become active citizens, neighbors, and church members.

Dordt College continues to be a uniquely intimate and vibrant community. It is also growing in diversity. As a college, we take full advantage of the strengths of our small size and rural location; we also take full advantage of technology that allows us to be connected with the world. We continue to enroll international students from countries around the world. In particular, this year we saw a significant increase in the number of Korean students enrolled. Some of this increase comes as a result of our sister college relationships with both Chongshin University in Seoul, and Kosin University in Busan. In addition to various student, faculty, and administrative interactions between our campuses, Dr. Sung Soo Kim, president of Kosin University, also gave our annual spring convocation address in January. These and other international relationships have proved to be a blessing and have provided opportunities for further growth in the international Christian community.

Many of our students catch a vision for serving that global community. From studying in other cultures, to joining mission teams around the world, to doing development work in Kenya and Cameroon, to working in international business, they are committed to being God's hands in his world. We have recently added a semester off-campus program in Nicaragua working

with the Nehemiah Center and strengthened our program with the Reformed University of Zwolle in the Netherlands.

This spring marked the retirement of our vice president for academic affairs, Dr. Rockne McCarthy, who has served in that post since 1989. His retirement also marks a new era in our academic administrative structure. Dr. Erik Hoekstra is our new provost and will give administrative leadership to both the academic and student services areas of the college. Ms. Bethany Schuttinga, our vice president for student services, who began her tenure last fall, will work closely with Dr. Hoekstra in developing a collaborative approach to student learning.

We are excited about the ways that God can and does use Dordt College in the work of his kingdom: a jump in enrollment, continued *U.S. News* recognition, an expanded nursing program, faculty research in bio-fuels, awards for our theater productions and staff, as well as dedicated faculty and staff who give generously of themselves and their time.

As we continue to develop our programs and educate young men and women who leave our campus ready to serve, we ask for your continued prayers and support as we make choices and build programs that will have a significant impact on our world for our Lord.

Dordt College  
Carl E. Zylstra, president

The 2007-2008 academic year marks the Institute for Christian Studies' fortieth anniversary. All along, we have focused on preparing young Christian scholars for teaching careers in both public and Christian universities.

Placing professors who have a well-thought-out Christian worldview in North America's universities is a strategic and timely mission. Many people in our society are suspicious of institutions and belief systems. We cannot count on young people to check out churches and youth groups the way they did even twenty or thirty years ago. This makes the role of university professors who can give a hopeful and compelling picture of what life in Christ is all about all the more important. Our graduates are able to do just that.

The Institute for Christian Studies' students study interdisciplinary philosophy. Students can major in one of six core cluster areas, which prepares them for teaching in a variety of university departments. The cluster names listed below give a good idea of our mission.

- Aesthetics, Hermeneutics, and Philosophy of Discourse – Courses on the arts, culture, language, rhetoric, and interreligious dialogue.
- Anthropology and Ethics – Courses on community, ecology, gender, and social critique.
- History of Philosophy.
- Knowledge, Truth, and Learning – Courses on education, schooling, epistemology, and metaphysics.
- Social and Political Philosophy – Courses on civil society, cultural pluralism, democracy, globalization, faith, and politics.
- Theology and Biblical Studies – Courses in spirituality, Christology, eschatology, worship, faith, and culture.

This year ICS will graduate eleven students from its M.A. programs, while many more continue their M.A. and Ph.D. studies. On May 9, the ICS will celebrate their graduations. At that time, Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff will also be awarded an honorary Ph.D. in recognition of his groundbreaking work as a Christian philosopher and his long support for the mission and vision of ICS. The next day, May 10, the ICS support community will gather in Toronto to celebrate its 40th anniversary with a gala dinner.

Not all ICS graduates go on to teach. They also serve as leaders for a wide variety of institutions. ICS graduates have gone on to be doctors, lawyers, politicians, business people, labor organizers, ecumenical leaders, and teachers.

Some key events—besides daily classes and year-end graduations—during this past year include the following:

- Six worldview conferences – As part of its mission to advance Christian scholarship, ICS offers a variety of public events for academics and people wishing to explore how ideas prevalent in today's world relate to Christian faith. This year Dr. J. Richard Middleton, an ICS alum and professor of biblical studies at Rochester's Roberts Wesleyan College, and ICS professor Robert Sweetman led conferences on biblical ethics and the role of Christian institutions like church and school, respectively. Besides conferences in many Canadian cities, the ICS also offered one in the Chicago area, at Trinity Christian College.

- Six summer school courses – Besides the regular curriculum for fulltime students, ICS offered summer courses in Toronto and Hamilton. Designed for college graduates who would like to learn more about faith and life, course topics ranged from educational psychology to “ethics after Auschwitz.”
- Three senior members published books in 2006-2007: *In the Phrygian Mode: Neo-Calvinism, Antiquity and the Lamentations of Reformed Philosophy*, Robert Sweetman (ed.); *Social Philosophy after Adorno* by Lambert Zuidervaart; and *Wisdom and Curriculum: Christian Schooling After Postmodernity* by Doug Blomberg – We are looking forward to new book publications by Bob Sweetman and Nik Ansel this coming year—as well as many journal articles and speeches by the entire community. Publications is one of the key ways in which the thinking and perspective of ICS is carried to a much wider community.
- Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director emeritus of the Christian Reformed Church, has been appointed executive director of the Friends of ICS, our U.S. arm. Working part-time in this capacity, Dr. Borgdorff will increase awareness of ICS mission in the United States.

At the Institute for Christian Studies we believe our world will respond positively to Christian scholarship offered in a spirit of compassion and wisdom. We thank the many Christian Reformed churches that support us through prayer, ministry shares, and church offerings. We invite all those curious about our mission to find out more at [www.icscanada.edu](http://www.icscanada.edu).

Institute for Christian Studies  
John D. Suk, president

Greetings from The King's University College to all delegates to the 2008 synod of the Christian Reformed Church!

In the spring of 2007 the board, faculty, and staff of The King's University College adopted a thematic goal to focus everyone's efforts in 2007-2008: *Elevate King's identity and reputation*. Internally, this thematic goal generated a process of revising our mission and vision statements and defining King's niche in Christian higher education. Externally, our goal was to address the perception of King's as one of Western Canada's best kept secrets by celebrating and communicating institutional accomplishments more broadly and effectively.

God has blessed these efforts beyond our expectations. Our new mission statement proclaims that "we exist to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King." The process of refining our mission, values, and vision has contributed greatly to building enthusiasm and pride in King's as a place to study and work.

The goal of raising our profile externally was realized in good measure by King's first-time participation in *The Globe and Mail* University Report Card, a national survey of over 43,000 Canadian undergraduate students. On the question of "overall satisfaction with your university," our students gave King's an A+, the only such score in the nation. King's also received A+ ratings from students for important academic measures such as quality of teaching, faculty knowledge, and level of interactions with faculty. More important, students commented on the candid faith perspective evident in the curriculum. We are deeply grateful for this affirmation that, in choosing Christian higher education, students are choosing uncompromised quality in the context of an inspiring mission.

In February King's learned that chemistry professor Dr. Peter Mahaffy was a 2008 recipient of the prestigious 3M National Teaching Fellowship. This fellowship is regarded as Canada's top teaching award. Dr. Mahaffy was recognized both for his contributions to the learning community at King's and for his leadership in science education internationally. Dr. Mahaffy's award represents the first time a professor at a small faith-based university has been so honored. King's is proud of his accomplishment (which he attributes to inspirational students and colleagues in our supportive learning community) and grateful for this wonderful blessing on his (and our) work.

The King's University College is deeply grateful that in September 2007 we were blessed with an increase in student enrollment, particularly in first- and second-year, after three years of declined enrollment. We trust that this will provide a strong basis on which to build in the coming years.

King's is grateful for the support we receive from CRC congregations in the form of ministry shares and offerings for our institution, as well as the generous support we receive from individual members of the CRC. We value our spiritual bond with the CRC, and we ask for the ongoing prayer support of the churches as we pursue our mission on behalf of the King who is the Lord of learning.

The King's University College  
Harry Fernhout, president

Kuyper College has now completed 69 years of education and training for people focused on ministry and service to Christ and his church. Today, we could not be more enthused and humbled over the mission of the college and its impact as we see an increasing number of students coming to and graduating from Kuyper. We hope that you too are energized by knowing that so many young people—as well as older adults making career changes—are sensing and responding to God’s call to ministry-related occupations.

Students continue to double-major at Kuyper as we require satisfactory completion of both a Bible and theology concentration as well as a major in one of our many professional programs. I am especially pleased to report to you how well the integration of the professional and Bible majors unfolds as our professors regularly meet together and encourage each other in the integration of Bible and Reformed worldview theology. Our strong emphasis upon the practical application of one’s faith into world situations is maintained through our additional requirements of field education experiences.

The important new major we added last year—music and worship—saw its first group of students complete their required sequence of courses. Enrollment in this major doubled over enrollment last year, and there is strong interest in expanding the scope of the program. An interesting note on the caliber of students entering the program: three music and worship students were selected last year to join the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra Choir.

As we develop our sports ministry major, we fielded our first intercollegiate teams in women’s and men’s basketball. This has been exciting for us, and we are impressed with how well the new and young teams have done in competition against long-established programs. The Cougars have added a new dynamic to campus life, and we have found the addition of this program to be a very positive experience.

The growth in enrollment we have experienced (38 percent in the new class) has resulted in two major challenges: to find additional funds for the increased number of student scholarships we wish to award and to meet space needs for housing, classrooms, and administrative functions. We hope to expand and deepen our base of support as we enlist the investment necessary to support our growing ministry. The support and care shown us historically by the CRC are certainly appreciated, and we ask that you continue to partner with us as we strive to meet the needs of our church and all who desire to serve her.

We encourage you to check out [www.kuyper.edu](http://www.kuyper.edu) for more information on the college. And whenever you wish to pay a visit to campus, please let us know so that we can demonstrate our hospitality. It is wonderful to see how God has blessed us, and we are grateful to the CRC for being a significant part of that blessing as we serve him together.

Kuyper College  
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president



As we celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2008, we are thankful to the Lord for the blessings we have experienced, and we appreciate this opportunity to share some highlights from the past year. We welcomed 885 students (818 full-time equivalent) this past September, our highest overall enrollment to date. Given the current challenging environment, we are pleased that we have been able to maintain our enrollment at about 820 FTE, especially in view of a record number of 185 students who graduated last May. We continue to plan for growth to an enrollment of 1,000 students by 2012.

Redeemer's students come from across Canada, representing eight Canadian provinces, six U.S. states, and seven other countries. These students represent over 40 different denominations, a diversity that enriches our campus. **Approximately 55 percent of students are from Reformed background.** Together, they contribute to a spiritually vibrant campus, led by our chaplain, Dr. Syd Hielema. This year we have focused on the theme of prayer and worship in a number of campus-wide events. Over 25 percent of students are actively involved in a wide variety of ministry opportunities, including weekly volunteering at agencies in downtown Hamilton, mission trips during reading week and during the summer, and field placements and internships.

Our campus has also been enriched by a number of notable speakers, including Dr. Marva Dawn, who gave our annual lectures, *The World and our Calling*, and Dr. Eva Olsson, a holocaust survivor who helped us mark the annual United Nations day of commemoration of the holocaust (January 27) with the local Jewish community.

In addition, these events were part of a larger social justice week that included a conference at Redeemer.

Enrollment in our teacher education program, which has just received its five-year reaccreditation, continues to grow and is now our largest program. We continue to examine ways to expand our programs in social work and youth ministry and are working on a one-year pre-engineering transfer program. Finally, we continue to develop our continuing education program to make Redeemer more of a center of reflection for Christian leaders in the field, building on our growing summer program for in-service teachers.

We are thankful that we continue to attract well-qualified faculty. This year we have been able to add four new faculty in replacement positions, bringing our total to 45 full-time and 39 part-time faculty members who provide instruction to our students in the context of a biblical worldview. It is exciting to see a new generation of Christian scholars taking their place in Redeemer's faculty as some of our original faculty retire. Faculty have accomplished much in their scholarship and creative endeavors, and our research centers have also been active this past year. Research activities at the university have been supported by institutional grants and by the Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Jackman and Herman Dooyeweerd Foundations, and other donors.

Redeemer is completing the refurbishing and upgrading of its campus, using funds from the \$11.5 million Growing with Integrity campaign, with new campus signage, a second soccer field, and an interpretative trail system

in our 30-acre conservation and recreation park at the north end of campus. At the same time, we continue to work at raising additional funds for scholarships, bursaries, and work study to ensure that a Christian university education remains accessible. We have now reached the \$2.3 million mark in our \$3.3 million Student Support campaign.

In this context, we are 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 for our mission of providing Christian university education and promoting Christian scholarship from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective.

Redeemer University College  
Justin D. Cooper, president

Trinity Christian College is celebrating God's blessings as the college enters its forty-ninth year of providing quality Christian higher education. Traditional enrollment reached a record 1,030 in the fall of 2007. Total enrollment came to 1,367. Approximately 50 percent of students are drawn to Trinity from the Christian Reformed Church and other Reformed denominations. We give praise for the support from churches and individuals who are committed to making Christian higher education a priority for future generations of Christian leaders.

Trinity also received national recognition when *U.S. News & World Report* ranked us as one of the top baccalaureate colleges in the Midwest at No. 28 in "America's Best Colleges" for 2008.

Trinity is also rejoicing in the growth of its campus facilities. Work on the new Art and Communication Center has been under way for months. Renovations on a structure, which was formerly a restaurant and is located on the east side of campus, were completed at the end of 2007. The facility was opened to students, faculty, staff, and community members as the Bootsma Bookstore Café, named in honor of former Trinity president Dr. Kenneth Bootsma. The location will serve both the college and community as a place for fellowship, food, and coffee, and for purchasing books by Christian authors.

The Church Connection Initiative at Trinity (CCIT) continues to strengthen local churches. This year, the CCIT again co-sponsored the Hymn Festival in March and various conferences and lectures, such as Discerning Your Calling Conversation, co-hosted by Calvin Theological Seminary. The CCIT is a partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, the Center for Excellence in Preaching, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

The Office of Community Partnerships continues to nurture Trinity's relationship with area neighborhoods by offering service-learning opportunities for students with such organizations as Elim Christian Services, Restoration Ministries, Roseland Christian Ministries, and Habitat for Humanity. Partnerships with local schools and non-profit organizations here and abroad provide opportunities for Trinity to serve and for Trinity students to be educated through experiential learning while helping others. Trinity was named to the 2007 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. This distinction from the highest levels of government recognizes an institution's leadership in helping to build a culture of service and civic engagement on campuses and in the nation.

This year, Trinity's Praise Team toured Missouri, Colorado, New Mexico, and California during Interim in January, performing at schools and churches. Interim also featured non-traditional learning and service opportunities in England, South Africa, India, Jamaica, China, as well as Chicago, Louisiana, New York City, and Washington, D.C.

The Senior Academy of Learning at Trinity (SALT) and the Trinity Business Network (TBN) draw leading Christian voices to campus for senior citizens and business people. SALT courses cover a variety of topics from digital photography to the Middle East. Mr. Robert Israel, president of Israel's Designs for Living, Inc., is scheduled to present "How You Can Recapture Your Dreams" at this year's spring TBN event.

Trinity will continue to reach out to the community and beyond in 2008. For the third summer, the college will offer a variety of creative and athletic camps for kids in the surrounding communities, as well as hosting several groups and organizations for worship, discussion, and fellowship.

Looking ahead, we will be taking time throughout the year to gear up for Jubilee, our 50th anniversary celebration in 2009.

Trinity covets your prayers as we continue our forward momentum to equip students for service in God's kingdom.

Trinity Christian College  
Steven Timmermans, president

### **Calvinist Cadet Corps**

The Cadet Corps looked at the intergenerational aspect of the Christian life last year, with an annual theme of "Now . . . Pass it On!" Based on Psalm 145:4, men and boys alike learned the importance of passing on the eternal truths of the gospel from one generation to the next, and between friends of the same generation. The theme was introduced at the 2007 Counselors' Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in July. As always, the convention was a Spirit-filled experience for counselors and their families.

The next convention is scheduled for the summer of 2009. The theme has not been selected yet, but the place has. The Hawkeye Council from the Pella, Iowa, area has offered to host it, probably near Des Moines.

In the meantime, the big event in 2008 is the triennial international camporee. Everything is on schedule for 1,400 boys and men to drive, fly, or ride to Camp Northern Lights, near Burk's Falls, Ontario. It is about 125 miles north of Toronto, on privately owned wilderness land that volunteers have been developing for camp over the past two years. Activities will include rappelling (there is a 90-foot cliff on site), archery, mountain biking, a metal punch craft, riflery, orienteering, and more. Campers will be separated into cadres of ten people. They will arrive as strangers but will form bonds as they build their shelter for the week and prepare their own meals together. It's always an incredible growing experience—spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Last year the Cadet Corps returned to Kenya. Two men from North America visited the six Kenyan Cadet clubs that had begun in 2006 and trained more men to become Cadet counselors. The congregations in the Reformed Church of East Africa are delighted to have this ministry for their boys, and the most recent word we have is that there are now twenty Cadet clubs there. The ministry is growing despite the violence and unrest the country has experienced since the December 2007 elections. Please pray for an end to violence and for the safety of the Christians trying to minister there.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

### **GEMS Girls' Clubs**

We are celebrating! Exactly fifty years ago this year a small group of women from the Christian Reformed Church gathered together to lay the groundwork for a mentoring ministry to girls. Believing strongly in the principles set forth in Titus 2 that adult women are to mentor girls and help shape them into strong, young women of faith, they set about the task of developing a club program to meet the needs of girls. In 1958 Calvinettes was birthed and, within one year, 76 churches had formed clubs. Exactly fifty years and one name change later, 820 churches have GEMS Clubs in the United States, Canada, and Zambia. GEMS Clubs also exist in Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, Belarus, and Nigeria. So throughout 2008 we will be celebrating God's faithfulness to this ministry.

One important celebration will take place at this summer's Annual GEMS Counselors' Leadership Conference in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Women who have been in GEMS as counselors or girls or who consider themselves "friends" of GEMS are warmly invited to join current counselors for this very special event. The theme for the coming year will be introduced at the conference. Micah 6:8, the verse used as the "aim" of the overall ministry, will serve as the theme verse for the yearlong celebration.

"I belong to God." "I am a daughter of the King!" Girls often made these comments after studying this year's theme of *Abba, I Belong to You*. Helping girls understand, claim, and live out their identities in Christ was the goal of this important theme study—one which also spoke to the hearts of counselors, women serving as mentors to girls. Nearly 23,000 girls gained a greater awareness of their relationship to God the Father as the truth of 1 John 3:1 was revealed.

Approximately 200 early teen girls attended last summer's GET Connected! Camp. "My favorite part of camp is chapel. I've never before worshiped God like that nor felt so close to him." This quote reflects the heartfelt response of most every girl who attends the GEMS summer camp event.

As a result of *The Call to Africa* that came to GEMS in December 2005, we have now started 14 GEMS Clubs in Zambia and trained over 100 women to serve as leaders in clubs. Culturally relevant curriculum has been developed, and now every Saturday morning over 500 young girls are meeting with their counselors. Inside their small churches or outside on benches—anywhere they can—girls are gathering to learn more about the love of their Savior. Back in the United States and Canada, 14 clubs have adopted the clubs in Zambia as sister clubs and are providing the financial support needed to maintain them. In addition, *The House that GEMS Built*, the orphan home for eight children and their new "momma," was completed. The new family has moved in and are being cared for by support from GEMS Clubs in the United States and Canada. Through their growing awareness of GEMS activities in Zambia and the living conditions there, girls in North America are learning how to become activists for Christ.

For all the opportunities for kingdom work, service, and growth, GEMS gives thanks to our great God. We give thanks also to the Christian Reformed Church for entrusting to our care and nurture your beautiful girls.

GEMS Girls' Clubs  
Jan Boone, director

## Youth Unlimited

Youth Unlimited has a rich history of helping churches challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform their world for him. While we celebrate and thank God for that history, we also realize the need to continuously adapt the methods we use to accomplish our mission to effectively reach and connect with the current culture and needs of youth and their leaders today.

Over the past eight years, Youth Unlimited has made an impact on 25,858 young people through events like the annual Convention and the mission experiences of SERVE and ENCOUNTER. Following these events, we are

blessed by hearing many amazing stories from students about God's working in their lives. Time and again, church elders share testimonies of young people who have come before them to publicly profess their faith upon returning from one of these heart-changing events.

As Youth Unlimited moves forward, we continue to have a passion for supporting the local church in its responsibility of reaching youth. Just as we have seen a transition over the years from church youth ministry being led primarily by volunteers to nearly half being led by professional youth ministry staff, we know that we too need to adapt. To best meet the needs of those two very different groups, Youth Unlimited needs to take a more holistic approach.

Youth Unlimited will continue doing what we do best—holding events that are life-changing for young people and are important in a young person's spiritual journey. In addition, we will look to meet the pressing and practical needs of those whom God has called to this great mission. It is our desire to be seen as a friend working in close relationship to help, support, and encourage the local church. In addition to Convention, SERVE, and ENCOUNTERS, this is being done through our Compass 21 program, *eEquip* publication, and online resources. We will continue offering these great resources while focusing on developing new methods and ways which meet the needs of those whom God has called to serve youth.

Time does not stand still . . . today there are millions of youth needing to hear about the good news of Jesus Christ and his calling on their life. Youth Unlimited is humbled and thankful to be able to serve alongside the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the great mission of challenging young people to give their life to Jesus and transform this world for him!

Youth Unlimited  
Jeff Kruithof, executive director

# STUDY COMMITTEES



### I. Introduction

#### A. *Committee mandate*

In response to the report of the Board of Trustees, Synod 2005 adopted the following recommendation:

That synod ask the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the CRC Publications Board, to appoint a committee to develop and propose to Synod 2007 an updated version of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

*Ground:* The current document is almost twenty years old. Given the changes in our world that have taken place since then, along with the fact that *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* does not function at the level of a confession but has served instead as a dynamic statement of faith, it must periodically be reviewed and perhaps revised if it is to speak contemporaneously.

(*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 734)

#### B. *Committee membership*

The Contemporary Testimony Revision Committee was appointed in summer 2005, consisting of Rev. Morris Greidanus (convener), Rev. Sheila Holmes, Rev. Clayton Libolt, Rev. Elizabeth Vander Haagen, Dr. George Vandervelde (George Vandervelde died in January 2007), Dr. Michael Goheen (since February 2007), and Rev. Leonard Vander Zee. (Ms. Aileen Van Ginkel was appointed as adviser but was unable to serve.)

#### C. *Committee activity*

At the first meeting in November 2005, the committee chose Rev. Morris Greidanus as chairperson and Rev. Clayton Libolt as secretary. We studied our mandate, noting that our task is “to develop and propose an updated version” of the Contemporary Testimony (CT). We launched our own review of the CT, and we sought out several groups for their comments. These included students, pastors from various ethnic groups, church planters, members of the original CT committee, and the whole church (by means of Dr. Peter Borgdorff’s *Banner* article, March 2006).

The committee received a number of valuable comments, which we have taken into account; however, in this first round, their number was very small, considering the size of our inquiry. A common response in conversation with church members was their surprise that the church was revising the CT and that it was nearing 20 years of age.

Our committee discussions and the comments we received alerted us to

- changed situations in these two decades with respect to the arms race, terrorism, global warming, other religions, the Internet, and embryonic research.
- a view of providence in the 1986 version that does not adequately address the continued presence of evil in the world and the distinction between what God allows (permissive will) and what God intends (active will); we concluded that we needed to affirm more clearly both the sovereignty of God and the admission that we cannot always see how God is guiding things to their purpose.
- a need to express more clearly our reliance on the Spirit and on grace.

- the reality that gender-specific pronouns and nouns like *kingdom* do not communicate the same things to us in 2006 as they did in 1986 and an appreciation for the way the 1986 CT was ahead of its time in this regard.
- the need to address some omissions and awkward phrasings.

In attempting to improve the CT in these and other ways, the committee decided to leave the basic structure and content of the 1986 CT unchanged, smoothing out various places and inserting larger changes at paragraphs 12 (13), 38 (40), and, as expected, in the last section 39-58 (42-58).

*Note:* References to paragraphs of the CT refer to the 2008 numbering; when the 1986 numbering differs, it is given in parentheses. See also the comparative index of paragraph numbers in the Appendix to the CT.

#### *D. Provisional revision*

The committee prepared a provisional revision and asked the BOT to circulate it to the churches and place it on the CRCNA website for comment. We had thought to receive comments and then prepare an updated revision in time for the Board of Trustees report to Synod 2007. The provisional revision was on the CRCNA website from December 1, 2006, until January 14, 2007. More than 100 responses were received from individuals and councils, many of them lengthy. Most respondents appreciated the proposed changes, and many offered detailed suggestions on content and editing. This was an exciting response, but it was too much for us to work with in the time we had, especially since one of our members, Dr. George Vandervelde, died suddenly in January 2007, which left us without his valuable insight and enthusiasm. Moreover, a number of respondents said that the church needed more time to look at the revision.

The committee met in February 2007 to review the responses and to make such changes to the revision as seemed warranted. We asked the BOT that this new proposed revision be placed before Synod 2007 and the churches by way of the printed *Agenda for Synod* for further comment by synod and the churches. We also asked the BOT to appoint another person to our committee to fill the vacancy following Dr. Vandervelde's death. They appointed Dr. Michael Goheen.

#### *E. Synod 2007*

Synod 2007 extended our mandate for another year, approved the appointment of Dr. Goheen to the committee, and arranged for a profitable discussion between the advisory committee on confessional matters and two members of the revision committee. In addition to the responses by the advisory committee, we received approximately one hundred more responses from churches and individuals. Again, most responses were appreciative, but pointed out changes that we might make in many different places. Some of these proposed changes were new, and others were proposals that we had already dealt with after the first series of responses.

#### *F. New revision*

In response to the many suggestions, we prepared another revision, reviewing each paragraph carefully, sometimes keeping what we had done, sometimes making new changes, and sometimes reverting to the language

of 1986. The committee believes that the new proposed CT improves both on the 1986 version and on our own earlier attempts. We suggest that readers note that this revision has its own thematic development and tone, and not look back and forth too much between the 1986 version and this proposed revision to note changes in wording. The changes may simply reflect the removal of a redundant element, an address of a contemporary concern, or the use of a more current phrase. We have tried to avoid as much as possible clichéd Christian language. For example, the truth that God's love is sovereign (1986) is captured more forcefully in paragraph 5 by the adjective *fierce* (2008), just the sort of surprising yet accurate description of God's love that is employed by, for example, Hosea, who says that the Lord will "roar like a lion" as he leads his children home (Hosea 11:10-11).

As noted above, in some cases the committee substantially changed earlier revisions in response to comments or because we were not satisfied with our earlier work. For example, in paragraph 29 (31), we rewrote the list of gifts so that, as in Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 12, tongues is later in the list. For paragraph 47 (50), we now have "God's truth" rather than "Truth" (which could be mistaken as a philosophical concept). And before paragraph 56 (57) (which we rewrote) we reinserted the language of the old paragraph 56 (55), which to us seemed to say something that no other article said and which needed saying at that point, that "our hope for a new creation is not tied to what humans can do" (par. 55 [56]).

We also edited and added supporting biblical references in this revision, placing them below each paragraph without a raised number in the text. This keeps the testimony's text clearer and suggests that these are broader references to biblical themes rather than prooftexts.

In general, we were overwhelmed and gladdened by so much interest in confessing the faith in a contemporary manner. The number of thoughtful responses and the requests for more time to consider this revision give evidence of the place *Our World Belongs to God* has won in the worship and life of the church. We thank all who wrote, and we trust that they will notice in many places that we heard them. We have taken the task of making *Our World Belongs to God* an even clearer testimony most seriously, and we rejoice at the warm interest of the church in its own contemporary testimony.

## II. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Morris Greidanus, chair; Dr. Clayton Libolt, reporter; and one alternate if needed be given the privilege of the floor when the proposed revision is discussed in committee and on the floor of synod.

B. That Synod 2008 adopt the 2008 revision of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

### *Grounds:*

1. Using the language of our time, the revision summarizes our faith and speaks to the concerns of our day in agreement with the Scriptures and approved confessions and in harmony with the 1986 Contemporary Testimony.
2. A provisional revision has been before the churches for a sufficient length of time and has received unprecedented review by many

individuals and councils, including the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and a synodical advisory committee. The revision committee has used these comments in preparing this updated 2008 version of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

C. That editing of and additions to the revised Contemporary Testimony at synod be discouraged and adoption of the 2008 revision as proposed be encouraged or be recommitted to the committee with specific editing and content suggestions.

*Grounds:*

1. See ground 2 in Recommendation B above.
2. The revision committee has benefited from the comments it received and has already inserted suggestions from the churches.
3. The 1986 testimony contained some awkward phrasings partly due to on-the-floor editing and insertions.

D. That synod express its gratitude to the many councils and individuals and the seminary faculty for their detailed and helpful responses to the committee.

### **III. Revision of *Our World Belongs to God***

#### ***Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony***

*Note:* The numbering of the paragraphs has changed somewhat; a comparative index of numbering changes in the Appendix indicates which 2008 paragraph corresponds to which 1986 paragraph.

#### *Preamble*

1. As followers of Jesus Christ,  
living in this world—  
which some seek to control,  
and others view with despair—  
we declare with joy and trust:  
Our world belongs to God!

For God's ownership of all things, see Psalm 24:1 (quoted in 1 Cor. 10:26), Job 41:11, and Deuteronomy 10:14. That this is also "our world"—given to the human race to keep and care for—is one of the themes of the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2.

2. From the beginning,  
through all the crises of our times,  
until the kingdom fully comes,  
God keeps covenant forever:  
Our world belongs to God!  
God is King: Let the earth be glad!  
Christ is victor: his rule has begun!  
The Spirit is at work: creation is renewed!  
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

For God's faithfulness see, among many passages, Psalm 89, 117, 145; Romans 8:31-39; and Hebrews 10:23. For the victory of God in Christ and the rule of Christ, see 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, Philippians 2:9-11, and Revelation 1:13-18. For the Spirit's work renewing creation, see Genesis 1 and Romans 8.

3. Still, despair and rebellious pride fill the earth:  
some, crushed by failure  
or broken by pain,  
give up on life and hope and God;  
others, shaken,  
but still hoping for human triumph,  
work feverishly to realize their dreams.  
As believers in God,  
we also struggle with the spirits of this age,  
resisting them in the power of the Spirit,  
testing them by God's sure Word.

Psalm 2 expresses the rebellious spirit of the human race. See also Romans 1-3. Ephesians 6:10-17 describes the struggle of believers with the spirits of the age. On testing the spirits, see 1 John 4.

4. Our world, fallen into sin,  
has lost its first goodness,  
but God has not abandoned the work of his hands:  
our Maker preserves this world,  
sending seasons, sun, and rain,  
upholding all creatures,  
renewing the earth,  
promising a Savior,  
guiding all things to their purpose.

See Genesis 3; 9:8-16; Psalm 104, especially verse 30; Matthew 5:45; and Acts 14:17. For the promises of a Savior, see Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 11:1-5; 42:1-7, 53; and Micah 5:2.

5. God holds this world  
with fierce love.  
Keeping his promise,  
he sends Jesus into the world,  
pours out the Holy Spirit,  
and announces the good news:  
sinners who repent and believe in Jesus  
live anew as members of the family of God—  
the firstfruits of a new creation.

For God's fierce love, see Hosea 11, especially verses 10-11. For statements of the gospel message, see John 3:1-21, Acts 2:36-39, Romans 10:7-11, and Ephesians 2:1-10. For "firstfruits," see Leviticus 23:9-14 and James 1:18.

6. We rejoice in the goodness of God,  
renounce the works of darkness,  
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.  
As covenant partners,  
set free for joyful obedience,  
we offer our hearts and lives  
to do God's work in the world.  
With tempered impatience,  
eager to see injustice ended,  
we expect the Day of the Lord.

We are confident  
that the light  
which shines in the present darkness  
will fill the earth  
when Christ appears.

Come, Lord Jesus.  
Our world belongs to you.

Among the texts referenced in this paragraph, see Matthew 5:17-20, 48; John 1:1-5, 9-13; 3:19-21; Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:1, 13-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:11; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 2:7-11; and Revelation 22:20.

### *Creation*

7. Our world belongs to God—  
not to us or earthly powers,  
not to demons, fate, or chance.  
The earth is the Lord's.

For references, see the first paragraph.

8. In the beginning, God—  
Father, Word, and Spirit—  
called this world into being  
out of nothing,  
and gave it shape and order.

See Genesis 1, where Creator, Word, and Spirit call creation into order. For the role of the Word in creation and Jesus as the Word, see John 1:1-14.

9. God formed sky, land, and sea;  
stars above, moon and sun,  
making a world of color, beauty, and variety—  
a fitting home for plants and animals, and us—  
a place to work and play,  
worship and wonder,  
love and laugh.  
God rested  
and gave us rest.  
In the beginning  
everything was very good.

On creation, besides Genesis 1 and 2, see Psalm 19; 33:6-9; and 104.

10. Made in God's image  
to live in loving communion with our Maker,  
we are appointed earthkeepers and caretakers  
to tend the earth, enjoy it,  
and love our neighbors.  
God uses our skills  
for the unfolding and well-being of his world  
so that creation and all who live in it may flourish.

For the image of God, see Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; and James 3:9.

11. Together,  
male and female,  
single and married,  
young and old—  
every hue and variety of humanity—  
we are called to represent God,  
for the Lord God made us all.  
Life is God's gift to us,  
and we are called to foster  
the well-being of all the living,  
protecting from harm  
the unborn and the weak,  
the poor and the vulnerable.

See Genesis 1:26-27, Galatians 3:26-28, and Acts 2:5-11. On how we treat the vulnerable among us as a measure of justice, see Isaiah 1:15-17 and James 1:27.

12. Even now,  
as history unfolds  
in ways we know only in part,  
we are assured  
that God is present in our world,  
holding all things in tender embrace  
and bending them to his purpose.  
The confidence that the Lord is faithful  
gives meaning to our days  
and hope to our years.  
The future is secure,  
for our world belongs to God.

For the providential care of God, see Isaiah 45:6-7, Matthew 6:25-34, and Luke 12:4-7.

### *Fall*

13. In the beginning of human history,  
our first parents walked with God.  
But rather than living by the Creator's word of life,  
they listened to the serpent's lie  
and fell into sin.  
In their rebellion  
they tried to be like God.  
As sinners, Adam and Eve feared  
the nearness of God  
and hid.

For the fall of humanity into sin, see Genesis 3. On the serpent, see in addition to Genesis 3, Revelation 12:9 and 20:2.

14. Fallen in that first sin,  
we prove each day  
that apart from grace  
we are guilty sinners:  
we fail to thank God,

we break God's laws,  
we ignore our tasks.  
Looking for life without God,  
we find death;  
grasping for freedom outside the law,  
we trap ourselves in Satan's snares;  
pursuing pleasure,  
we lose the gift of joy.

For the effects of the fall on humanity, see especially Romans 1:18-3:18.

15. When humans deface God's image,  
the whole world suffers:  
we abuse the creation or idolize it;  
we are estranged from our Creator,  
from our neighbor,  
from our true selves,  
and from all that God has made.

On the defacing of God's image, see Romans 1:21-23; for the restoration of the image in Christ, see Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:22-24, and Colossians 3:10.

16. All spheres of life—  
family and friendship,  
work and worship,  
school and state,  
play and art—  
bear the wounds of our rebellion.  
Sin is present everywhere—  
in pride of race,  
arrogance of nations,  
abuse of the weak and helpless,  
disregard for water, air, and soil,  
destruction of living creatures,  
slavery, murder, terror, and war,  
worship of false gods,  
the mistreatment of our bodies,  
and our frantic efforts to escape reality.  
We become victims of our own sin.

Among many passages, see Psalm 14 and 53, Amos 1-2, Romans 1:28-32, and Galatians 5:19-21.

17. In all our striving  
to excuse or save ourselves,  
we stand condemned  
before the God of truth.  
But our world,  
broken and scarred,  
still belongs to God,  
who holds it together  
and gives us hope.

See Psalm 62 and 89:28-37; Romans 5:3-11; 15:13; and Hebrews 11:1.



*Redemption*

18. While justly angry,  
God did not turn away  
from a world bent on destruction  
but turned to face it in love.  
With patience and tender care  
the Lord set out  
on the long road of redemption  
to reclaim the lost as his people  
and the world as his kingdom.

For God's response to sin, see Genesis 3:9-15, John 3:16, and Luke 1:68-75; for the aim to restore the kingdom, see Revelation 11:15.

19. Although Adam and Eve were expelled  
from the garden  
and their days burdened  
by the weight of sin,  
the Lord held on to them in love  
and promised to crush  
the evil forces  
they had unleashed.

For God's kindness to Adam and Eve, see Genesis 3:15-19.

20. When evil filled the earth,  
God judged it with a flood  
but rescued Noah and his family  
and animals of every kind.  
He covenanted with all creatures  
that seasons will continue  
and that such destruction  
will not come again  
until the last day  
when the Lord returns  
to make all things new.

For God's promise not to repeat the flood, see Genesis 9:8-17, 1 Peter 2, and 2 Peter 3; for the final renewal, see Revelation 21:1-5.

21. The Lord promised to be God  
to Abraham, Sarah, and their children,  
calling them to walk faithfully before him  
and blessing the nations through them.  
God chose Israel to show the glory of his name,  
the power of his love,  
and the wisdom of his ways.  
The Lord gave them the law  
through Moses  
and led them  
by rulers and teachers,

shaping a people  
in whom God is revealed—  
a light to the nations.

For God's promise to Abraham and to his people Israel, see Genesis 12:1-3, Deuteronomy 7-8, and Romans 9; for Abraham's children as the light to the nations, see Micah 6:8 and Isaiah 60.

22. When Israel spurned God's love—  
lusting after other gods,  
trusting in power and wealth,  
and hurting the weak—  
God scattered them among the nations,  
yet kept a faithful remnant  
and promised them the Messiah:  
a prophet to speak good news,  
a king to crush evil and rule the earth with justice,  
a priest to be sacrificed for sinners.  
God promised to forgive their sins  
and give them a new heart and a new spirit,  
moving them to walk in his ways.

For the scattering, see 2 Chronicles 36, Isaiah 10:1-11; for the promises, see Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36.

### *Christ*

23. Remembering the promise  
to reconcile the world to himself,  
God joined our humanity in Jesus Christ—  
the eternal Word made flesh.  
He is the long-awaited Messiah,  
one with us  
and one with God,  
fully human and fully divine,  
conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.

For Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, see Luke 1:31-35, John 1:1-14, and Hebrews 1:2-3.

24. As the second Adam,  
Jesus chose the path we had rejected.  
In his baptism and temptations,  
teaching and miracles,  
battles with demons  
and friendships with sinners,  
Jesus lived a full and righteous human life before us.  
As God's true Son,  
he lovingly obeyed the Father  
and made present in deed and word  
the coming rule of God.

In Romans 5:12-21, Christ is designated the second Adam. Hebrews 2:10-18 and 4:14-5:2 teach about his life of righteous humanity; the announcement of the kingdom is found, among other places, in Mark 1:1, 14, 15.

25. Standing in our place,  
Jesus suffered during his years on earth,  
especially in the tortures of the cross.  
He carried God's judgment on our sin—  
his sacrifice removed our guilt.  
God raised him from the dead:  
he walked out of the grave,  
conqueror of sin and death—  
Lord of Life!  
We are set right with God,  
given new life,  
and called to walk with him  
in freedom from sin's dominion.

For Jesus' life-long suffering, see Hebrews 5:7-10. All four of the gospel passion accounts portray the depths of his suffering on the cross. Jesus' resurrection victory is proclaimed often, especially in Matthew 28:1-10 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

26. Being both divine and human,  
Jesus is the only mediator.  
He alone paid the debt of our sin;  
there is no other Savior.  
We are chosen in Christ  
to become like him in every way.  
God's electing love sustains our hope:  
God's grace is free  
to save sinners who offer nothing  
but their need for mercy.

Christ is shown to be our mediator in 1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 9:11-15, and our only Savior in John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. For our election in Christ to be like Christ, see Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Ephesians 1:3-4.

27. Jesus ascended in triumph,  
raising our humanity to the heavenly throne.  
All authority, glory, and sovereign power  
are given to him.  
There he hears our prayers  
and pleads our cause before the Father.  
Blessed are all  
who take refuge in him.

For Christ's universal authority and intercession as ascended Lord, see Matthew 28:18, Psalm 2:12, 1 John 2:1-2, and Hebrews 7:25. For the ascension of our humanity with him, see Hebrews 4:14-16; Ephesians 1:20-22; 2:6; and Colossians 3:1-4.

### *The Spirit*

28. At Pentecost, promises old and new are fulfilled.  
The ascended Jesus becomes the baptizer,  
drenching his followers with his Spirit,  
creating a new community  
where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home.  
Revived and filled with the breath of God,  
women and men,

young and old,  
dream dreams  
and see visions.

On the fulfillment of promises at Pentecost along with dreams and visions, see Acts 2:16-21. On the ascended Jesus as baptizer and also the imagery of drenching in baptism of the Spirit, see Luke 3:16; John 1:32-22; 20:22; and Acts 2:32-33. On the Spirit creating a new community, note Acts 2:41-47 following Pentecost. On the Father, Son, and Spirit making their home with God's people, see John 14:15-24.

29. The Spirit renews our hearts  
and moves us to faith,  
leads us into truth,  
and helps us to pray,  
stands by us in our need,  
and makes our obedience fresh and vibrant.  
God the Spirit lavishes gifts on the church  
in astonishing variety—  
prophecy, encouragement, healing,  
teaching, service, tongues, discernment—  
equipping each member  
to build up the body of Christ  
and to serve our neighbors.

On the Spirit's work of renewing our hearts, see Titus 3:4-7; moving us to faith, Romans 5:1-5; leading us into truth, John 16:13; helping us to pray, Romans 8:26-27; standing by us in our need, Hebrews 2:18; and making our obedience fresh and vibrant, Romans 8:1-11. On the Spirit's gifts, see 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8.

30. The Spirit gathers people  
from every tongue, tribe, and nation  
into the unity of the body of Christ.  
Anointed and sent by the Spirit,  
the church is thrust into the world,  
ambassadors of God's peace,  
announcing forgiveness and reconciliation,  
proclaiming the good news of grace.  
Going before them and with them,  
the Spirit convinces the world of sin  
and pleads the cause of Christ.  
Men and women, impelled by the Spirit,  
go next door and far away  
into science and art,  
media and marketplace—  
every area of life,  
pointing to the reign of God  
with what they do and say.

On the gathering of all nations, see Revelation 7:9-17; on the Spirit and the church's mission, John 20:21-22, Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:8; on the church's mission as ambassadors, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; on the work of the Spirit in the world, John 16:7-11; and on the breadth of the church's mission in the Spirit, Philippians 1:27-2:15.

## *Revelation*

31. God gives this world  
many ways to know him.  
The creation shows his power and majesty.  
He speaks through prophets, poets, and apostles,  
and, most eloquently, through the Son.  
The Spirit, active from the beginning,  
moved human beings to write the Word of God  
and opens our hearts to God's voice.

For general revelation, see Romans 1 and Acts 14; for the inspiration of the Bible, see 1 Timothy 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 1:16-21; and for the full revelation in Christ, see Hebrews 1 and Colossians 1.

32. The Bible is the Word of God,  
the record and tool of his redeeming work.  
It is the Word of truth,  
breath of God,  
fully reliable in leading us  
to know God  
and to walk with Jesus Christ  
in new life.

For the nature of Scripture, see Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31, Acts 8:26-39, James 1:18, and references in paragraph 31.

33. The Bible tells the story  
of God's mighty acts  
in the unfolding  
of covenant history.  
It is one revelation in two testaments,  
the Bible reveals God's will  
and the sweep of God's redeeming work.  
Illumined and equipped by the Spirit,  
disciples of Jesus hear and do the Word,  
witnessing to the good news  
that our world belongs to God,  
who loves it deeply.

For God's mighty acts, see Acts 2 and 7; for our instruction, see Matthew 16:13-19, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, and James 1:19-27.

## *God's New People*

34. In our world,  
where many journey alone,  
nameless in the bustling crowd,  
Satan and his evil forces  
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;  
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,  
gathers a new community—  
those who by God's gift  
put their trust in Christ.

In the new community  
all are welcome:  
the homeless come home,  
the broken find healing,  
the sinner makes a new start;  
the despised are esteemed,  
the least are honored,  
and the last are first.  
Here the Spirit guides  
and grace abounds.

For the new community, see 1 Peter 2:4-7; for the attacks of Satan, 1 Peter 5:8-11; for the gracious welcome, Matthew 11:28-30 and 1 Peter 5:5-7.

35. The church is the fellowship of those  
who confess Jesus as Lord.  
She is the bride of Christ,  
his chosen partner,  
loved by Jesus and loving him:  
delighting in his presence,  
seeking him in prayer—  
silent before the mystery of his love.

For the confession, see Matthew 10:32-33; for the church as the bride of Christ, see Ephesians 2:6; 5:21-33; 1 John 3:11-17; 4:13-21; and Revelation 21:9.

36. Our new life in Christ  
is celebrated and nourished  
in the fellowship of congregations,  
where we praise God's name,  
hear the Word proclaimed,  
learn God's ways,  
confess our sins,  
offer our prayers and gifts,  
and celebrate the sacraments.

For the church's worship, see Matthew 6:5-15; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 10; and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

37. God meets us in the sacraments,  
communicating grace to us  
by means of water, bread, and wine.  
  
In baptism,  
whether of the newly born  
or newly converted,  
God reminds and assures us  
of our union with Christ in covenant love,  
the washing away of our sin,  
and the gift of the Holy Spirit—  
expecting our love and trust in return.

Matthew 3:13-17, with Matthew 28:19, establishes baptism as a gospel sacrament. That baptism is for children as well as adults and is accompanied by the gift of the Spirit as indicated in Acts 2:28-29. Titus 3:5 calls baptism a washing away of sins. Romans 6:1-11 and

Galatians 3:27 show how it forms us as members of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:1-10 indicates that baptism in itself is not a guarantee of salvation.

38. In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers  
his own crucified body and shed blood  
to his people,  
assuring them a share  
in his death and resurrection.  
By the Holy Spirit, he feeds us  
with his resurrection life  
and binds us to each other  
as we share one loaf and cup.  
We receive this food gladly,  
believing, as we eat,  
that Jesus is our life-giving food and drink  
and that he will come again  
to call us to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Matthew 26:17-29 and parallels establish the Lord's Supper as a gospel sacrament. On the meaning of the Lord's Supper, see 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 8:1-13; 10:14-21; and 11:23-26. See also Jesus' strong words on his presence in the Lord's Supper in John 6:48-58.

39. The church is a gathering  
of forgiven sinners called to be holy.  
Saved by the patient grace of God,  
we deal patiently with others  
and together confess our need  
for grace and forgiveness.  
Restored in Christ's presence,  
shaped by his life,  
this new community lives out  
the ongoing story of God's reconciling love,  
announces the new creation,  
and works for a world of justice and peace.

On the church as a forgiven community called to be holy, see Ephesians 1:3-7; on dealing with one another patiently, Galatians 6:1-5 and Colossians 3:12-14; on the need for confession and restoration, 1 John 1:8-2:6; and on living out God's reconciling love as part of a new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and 1 John 3:16-17.

40. We grieve that the church,  
which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope,  
and spans all time, place, race, and language,  
has become a broken communion in a broken world.  
When we struggle  
for the truth of the gospel  
and for the righteousness God demands,  
we pray for wisdom and courage.  
When our pride or blindness  
hinders the unity of God's household,  
we seek forgiveness.  
We marvel that the Lord gathers the broken pieces  
to do his work  
and that he blesses us still

with joy, new members,  
and surprising evidences of unity.  
We commit ourselves to seeking and expressing  
the oneness of all who follow Jesus,  
and we pray for brothers and sisters  
who suffer for the faith.

On the unity of the church, see John 17:20-23 and Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:1-16.

*The Mission of God's People*

41. Joining the mission of God,  
the church is sent  
with the gospel of the kingdom  
to call everyone to know and follow Christ  
and to proclaim to all  
the assurance that in the name of Jesus  
there is forgiveness of sin  
and new life for all who repent and believe.  
The Spirit calls all members  
to embrace God's mission  
in their neighborhoods  
and in the world:  
to feed the hungry,  
bring water to the thirsty,  
welcome the stranger,  
clothe the naked,  
care for the sick,  
and free the prisoner.  
We repent of leaving this work to a few,  
for this mission is central to our being.

On our part in God's mission, see Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 14:45-49, and John 17:18; on seeing our mission beyond our local community, Matthew 24:14 and Acts 13:1-3; on meeting the needs of people, Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 4:18-19; and on the centrality of mission to our being, John 20:21.

- 42 In a world estranged from God,  
where happiness and peace are offered in many names  
and millions face confusing choices,  
we witness—  
with respect for followers of other ways—  
to the only one in whose name salvation is found:  
Jesus Christ.  
In Jesus, God reconciles the world to himself.  
God loves all creation;  
his compassion knows no bounds.

On the exclusive claims of Christ, see John 14:6 and Acts 4:12; on God's love and compassion for the world, see Matthew 9:36-38 and John 3:16.

43. Jesus Christ rules over all.  
To follow this Lord is  
to serve him wherever we are



without fitting in,  
light in darkness,  
salt in a spoiling world.

On the rule of Christ over the whole world, see Philippians 2:9-11, Colossians 1:15-20, and Revelation 11:15; on being light, salt, and not fitting in, see Matthew 5:13-16 and Romans 12:1-2.

44. Life is a gift from God's hand,  
who created all things.  
Receiving this gift thankfully,  
with reverence for the Creator,  
we protest and resist  
all that harms, abuses, or diminishes the gift of life,  
whether by abortion, pollution, gluttony,  
addiction, or foolish risks.  
Because it is a sacred trust,  
we treat all life with awe and respect,  
especially when it is most vulnerable—  
whether growing in the womb,  
touched by disability or disease,  
or drawing a last breath.  
When forced to make decisions  
at life's raw edges,  
we seek wisdom in community,  
guided by God's Word and Spirit.

On respect for all life, see Deuteronomy 5:17 and Psalm 104:14-30 and 139:14-16. Our very bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

45. Since God made us male and female in his image,  
we respect each other as equals,  
not flaunting or exploiting our sexuality.  
While our roles and capacities may differ,  
we are careful not to confine God's gifts and calling  
to the shape of our cultural patterns or expectations.  
Sexuality is disordered in our fallen world—  
brokenness, abuse, pornography, and loneliness are the result—  
but Christ's renewing work gives hope  
for order and healing  
and surrounds suffering persons  
with compassionate community.

Male and female, we are all made in God's image: Genesis 1:26-27 and Galatians 3:27. On sexual disorder as a result of sin, see Romans 1:24 and 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.

46. We are the family of God,  
serving Christ together in Christian community.  
Single for a time or a life,  
devoted to the work of God,  
we offer our love and service  
to the building of the kingdom.  
Married, in relationships of lifelong loyalty,  
we offer our lives to the same work:

building the kingdom,  
 teaching and modeling the ways of the Lord  
 so our children may know  
 Jesus as Lord  
 and learn to use their gifts  
 in lives of joyful service.  
 In friendship and family life,  
 singleness and marriage,  
 as parents and children,  
 we reflect the covenant love of God.  
 We lament the prevalence of divorce  
 and selfish individualism in our societies.  
 We belong to God.

See the apostle Paul's discussion of singleness and marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. On the importance of teaching and modeling the ways of the Lord, see Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4. Jesus' teaching on divorce is found in Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12. That we together reflect the love of God is taught in John 13:34-35 and all of 1 John.

47. Serving the Lord  
 in whom all things hold together,  
 we support sound education in our communities,  
 and we foster schools and teaching  
 in which God's truth shines in all learning.  
 All students,  
 without regard to abilities, race, or wealth,  
 bear God's image  
 and deserve an education  
 that helps them use their gifts fully.

For the importance of education, see Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Proverbs 4:1-9; for the need for God's light, Psalm 119:105; for the central place of Christ, Colossians 1:17; for equal acceptance, James 2:1-13.

48. Our work is a calling from God.  
 We work for more than wages  
 and manage for more than profit  
 so that mutual respect  
 and the just use of goods and skills  
 may shape the workplace.  
 While we earn or profit,  
 we love our neighbors by providing  
 useful products and services.  
 In our global economy,  
 we advocate meaningful work  
 and fair wages for all.  
 Out of the Lord's generosity to us,  
 we give freely and gladly  
 of our money and time.

For the place of work, see Genesis 2:15, Exodus 20:9, Ephesians 6:5-9, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; for justice in the workplace, Ezekiel 34 and James 5:1-5; for generosity, 2 Corinthians 9 and 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.

49. Rest and leisure are gifts from God  
that relax us and set us free  
to discover and to explore.  
But we confess  
that often our addiction to busyness  
allows our tools and toys to invade our rest  
and that an internet world with its temptations  
distorts our leisure.  
Reminding each other that  
our Maker rested and gave us rest,  
we seek to rest more trustingly  
and to entertain ourselves more simply.

For rest, see Genesis 2:2-3 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15; for the discriminating use of leisure, Philippians 4:8-9 and Ephesians 4:17-32.

50. Grateful for advances  
in science and technology  
we participate in their development,  
fostering care for creation  
and respect for the gift of life.  
We welcome discoveries that prevent or cure diseases  
and that help support healthy lives.  
We respect embryonic life,  
approaching each new discovery,  
whether of science or of medical technique,  
with careful thought,  
seeking the will of God.

In Genesis 1:28-31 and 9:1-7, God gives to humanity the right and responsibility to develop and care for creation; for a reflection on the limitations of human technology and need for divine wisdom, see Job 28; for the continuing goodness of creation and the need for a prayerful approach to what we use of it, see 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

51. We lament that our abuse of creation  
has brought lasting damage  
to the world we have been given:  
polluting streams and soil,  
poisoning the air,  
altering the climate,  
and damaging the earth.  
We commit ourselves  
to honor all living things  
and to protect them from abuse and extinction,  
for our world belongs to God.

Genesis 1:28-29; 7:1-5; Psalm 8; and Romans 8:18-25 teach that we are entrusted with caring for the earth.

52. We obey God first;  
we respect the authorities that rule,  
for they are established by God:  
we pray for our rulers,

and we work to influence governments—  
resisting them only when Christ and conscience demand.  
We are thankful for the freedoms  
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;  
we grieve with those who live under oppression,  
and we seek for them the liberty to live without fear.

Romans 13:1-7 teaches respect for governing authorities (see also 1 Peter 2:13-17); Revelation 13 illustrates government gone wrong. Colossians 1:16 teaches that authority and power come from Christ; Ephesians 6:12 warns us that authority and power can become infected by evil.

53. We call on all governments to do public justice  
and to protect the rights and freedoms  
of individuals, groups, and institutions  
so that each may do their tasks.  
We urge governments and pledge ourselves  
to safeguard children and the elderly  
from abuse and exploitation,  
to bring justice to the poor and oppressed,  
and to promote the freedom  
to speak, work, worship, and associate.

That governments are called to justice generally and that how a government treats the poor and the weak is a key indicator of a society's commitment to justice is taught in all the prophets and in psalms like Psalm 72.

54. Followers of the Prince of Peace  
are called to be peacemakers,  
promoting harmony and order  
and restoring what is broken.  
We call on our governments to work for peace  
and to restore just relationships.  
We deplore the spread of weapons  
in our world and on our streets  
with the risks they bring  
and the horrors they threaten.  
We call on all nations to reduce their arsenals  
to what is needed  
in the defense of justice and freedom.  
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,  
confessing that our world belongs to God;  
he is our sure defense.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers . . ." (Matthew 5:9).

#### *New Creation*

55. Our hope for a new creation is not tied  
to what humans can do,  
for we believe that one day  
every challenge to God's rule  
will be crushed.

His kingdom will fully come,  
and the Lord will rule.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

On this hope, see 1 Peter 1:3-12, 2 Peter 3:3-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, and Revelation 11:15.

56. We long for that day  
when our bodies are raised,  
the Lord wipes away our tears,  
and we dwell forever in the presence of God.  
We will take our place in the new creation,  
where there will be no more death  
or mourning or crying or pain,  
and the Lord will be our light.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

For the coming of the kingdom of God, see Matthew 24, Acts 1:10-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, and Revelation 19:11-16. 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of the resurrection of the body, Revelation 21:4 of the wiping away of tears, and Revelation 21:22-27 of the light of heaven.

57. On that day  
we will see our Savior face to face,  
sacrificed Lamb and triumphant King,  
just and gracious.  
He will set all things right,  
judge evil, and condemn the wicked.  
We face that day without fear,  
for the Judge is our Savior,  
whose shed blood declares us righteous.  
We live confidently,  
anticipating his coming,  
offering him our daily lives—  
our acts of kindness,  
our loyalty, and our love—  
knowing that he will weave  
even our sins and sorrows  
into his sovereign purpose.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Revelation 5 describes the Lion and the Lamb. For the just judgments of the Lord, see Revelation 19:1-10. A picture of the multitude of those declared righteous in Christ is found in Revelation 7:9-17. The concept of God weaving all things together is found, among other places, in Romans 8:28-39.

58. With the whole creation  
we join the song:  
“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth  
and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and praise!”  
He has made us a kingdom of priests  
to serve our God,  
and we will reign on earth.

God will be all in all,  
 righteousness and peace will flourish,  
 everything will be made new,  
 and every eye will see at last  
 that our world belongs to God.  
 Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus!

For the imagery of this paragraph, see Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 40, 1 Peter 2:9-10, and Revelation 4-5.

## Appendix

### Comparative Index of the 1986 and 2008 Versions of the Contemporary Testimony

1986 Version	2008 Version	1986 Version	2008 Version
Par. 1	Par. 1	Par. 30	Par. 28
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Par. 3	Par. 3	Par. 32	Par. 30
Par. 4	Par. 4	Par. 33	Par. 29
Par. 5	Par. 5	Par. 34	Par. 31
Par. 6	Par. 6	Par. 35	Par. 32
Par. 7	Par. 7	Par. 36	Par. 33
Par. 8	Par. 8	Par. 37	Par. 34
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Par. 15	Par. 14	Par. 44	Par. 41-42
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**Outline****I. Background**

- A. *History and mandate*
- B. *Toward a new paradigm for committee work*

**II. Two clarifications**

- A. *The current status of children at the Table*
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**III. Preliminary observations**

- A. *1 Corinthians 11*
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**IV. Our workplan**

- A. *Communication*
- B. *Addressing the issues*

**V. The significance of these issues****VI. Recommendations****I. Background****A. History and mandate**

In light of the decision of Synod 2006 about children at the Lord's Supper and the work of a subsequent task force, Synod 2007 established our committee with the following mandate:

To deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) participation in the Lord's Supper and (2) public profession of faith, by means of:

- a. Formulating a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.
- b. Describing how Christian Reformed congregations in various contexts are experiencing intergenerational faith formation and sacramental practice and discerning which liturgical, educational, and organizational practices should be commended by synod to the entire denomination on the basis of their pastoral and theological integrity.
- c. Discussing with various agencies and organizations that work in the areas of faith formation, pastoral care, and worship (e.g., Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, Youth Unlimited, Christian Schools International, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship) what kinds of collaborative educational efforts best promise to support pastorally sensitive, theologically grounded work in these topics.
- d. Providing guidelines, liturgical materials, and pastoral advice on these topics in collaboration with Faith Alive Christian Resources.

- e. Serving as a resource for discussions of these topics at a congregational and classical level.
- f. Reporting to synod annually for the next five years.

*Grounds:*

- a. Our approach to the question of participation at the Lord's Supper and public profession of faith must proceed on the basis of a clear statement of biblical and theological rationale.
- b. A study committee on biblical and theological issues alone is insufficient. An ongoing discussion needs to take place at all levels of the church to link our theology with our practice within a whole cluster of issues that relate to the sacraments, the preached Word, faith formation, church discipline, and practices that sustain lifelong discipleship.
- c. Our approach to children at the Lord's Supper and profession of faith needs to be part of a larger discussion of faithful and vital intergenerational faith formation in various contexts. Mutual accountability and learning among very different types of congregations is only likely to happen when there are intentional structures in place to promote it.
- d. Several congregations are already asking for shared wisdom on this topic.
- e. Given strongly held opinions on this issue and growing diversity of practices, this topic is likely to be discussed throughout the denomination for at least the next five years. A pastorally and theologically oriented committee, attuned to the diversity of ministry settings within the denomination, would be well positioned to shepherd a healthy theological dialogue within the denomination over time.
- f. This approach would be a cost-effective means of shepherding this discussion, especially given the availability of the Internet to promote communication among committee members and to disseminate information to the denomination.
- g. The work of such a committee would be a fitting way to carry forward the themes, insights, and energy developed during the denominational Year of Faith Formation (2007-2008).

*(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 655-57)*

In addition, Synod 2007 gave us some additional related work on the subject of infant dedication.

- 4. That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide biblical and pastoral guidance for councils who are conversing with those members who are requesting infant dedication in place of infant baptism.

*Ground:* Covenantal theology is foundational for faith formation (Gen. 17:1-14; 1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:38-39).

- 5. That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide guidance concerning liturgical practices surrounding infant baptism.

*Ground:* Because liturgical practices teach doctrine, it is important that liturgical practices reflect the doctrinal standards of the denomination.

*(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 621)*

In the fall of 2007, the BOT appointed the following people to this committee:

Dr. John D. Witvliet, chairperson  
 Dr. Howard Vanderwell, secretary  
 Ms. Irene Bakker  
 Rev. Andrew Chun  
 Ms. Jill Friend  
 Dr. Syd Hielema  
 Ms. Pat Nederveld  
 Dr. H. David Schuringa  
 Rev. Gerard Dykstra, ex officio



The committee began its work in December 2007. This preliminary report reflects the first two months of committee deliberations in our five-year mandate.

*B. Toward a new paradigm for committee work*

Our committee takes note of the unique mandate that we have been given. We note that our mandate includes some work that is similar to past synodical study committees, such as that of producing a written document which will help synod respond to particular issues in the life of the church. We also note that our mandate includes some new kinds of work for a denominational committee, particularly that of working to strengthen communication, trust, and mutual learning within the denomination. Our mandate acknowledges that synodical decisions by themselves are not sufficient to generate a shared vision, commitment, or set of practices. But synodical decisions that emerge from and shape ongoing local conversations, learning, and ministry planning do promise to deepen our work together.

When we look back on our work after five years, we not only want to be able to say that we have addressed particular issues in scripturally sound ways. We also want to be able to say that we have worked well together as a denomination, we have wrestled with Scripture, we have honored and learned from the Reformed confessions, we have shared with each other the fruits of our local ministries, we have supported each other in prayer, and we have strengthened our ministry among children, youth, seekers, and lifelong Christians of all ages.

We note the unique timeline we have been given for our work: a five-year timeline, with expectations of annual reports to synod. In light of this timeline, we urge ourselves as a committee and we urge the denomination to practice two dispositions with respect to this work:

1. *Patience* – We have noted that this has been a complicated topic in the history of the church and certainly is for our denomination as well. For such matters to be dealt with well by the church, significant time, study, and discussion will be needed. Some become impatient with the time required, but past experience in the church has illustrated that we are able to deal with matters more wisely when we exercise patience.
2. *Urgency* – One temptation we want to avoid as we engage our work is that of simply delaying our most substantive work to the end of the five-year process. Our goal is to stimulate sustained engagements with the most substantive portion of our agenda. Because our committee has only met over a period of two months, we have not completed a report on the specific presenting issues before us, but we do anticipate giving the church a clear idea of the process we will be following, the issues that will be addressed, and beginning efforts to engage both Synod 2008 and the churches in discussions on the matters before us.

## **II. Two clarifications**

*A. The current status of children at the Table*

Our first order of business is to clarify for our churches the status of the decisions of Synod 2006 to propose a revision to the Church Order that

would “allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord’s Supper on the basis of their full membership in the covenant community.”

Because Synod 2007 did not adopt the proposed changes to the Church Order, the decision of 2006 is not in effect. Synod 2007 further clarified this matter by defeating a motion to “grant to congregations the freedom to admit all baptized members to the Lord’s Table upon approval of the consistory.”

In this context, we note that it would require actions of two consecutive synods to effect a change in the Church Order. We also note that it is too early in our committee’s deliberations to anticipate whether we will or will not recommend a change in the Church Order.

This means that at present, the official position of the CRC with respect to children at the Lord’s Supper is that approved by Synod 1995, as follows:

2. That churches be encouraged to implement the decision of Synod 1988 (Art. 72, C, 3, a ,b, c and Art. 76, B, 3, d) by use of the four-step procedure outlined in Report A, with a modification in Step 3.

Step 1: The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord’s Supper to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church-school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to participate in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder, church-school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on a basic explication of the Apostles’ Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parent(s) on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: The child makes a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child’s first communion and to make public promises of support.

3. That the modified trial form of 1989 [*Acts of Synod 1995*, pages 715-716] be accepted as a suggested form for public profession of faith by children.
4. That each congregation devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership in the local congregation from confessing members who, having attained the age of 18, have not yet made such a commitment.
5. That membership in the Christian Reformed Church be counted in two categories:

- a. Baptized members – persons who have been baptized but not admitted to the Lord's Supper.
- b. Confessing members – persons who have been admitted to the Lord's Supper on the basis of a personal expression of faith ("profession of faith"). Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

*(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 719-20)*

*B. Toward clarity about what children at the Table means*

Second, our committee believes that it is important to point out that recent discussions of the topic of children at the Lord's Supper have been complicated by the fact that people mean different things when they advocate for the presence of children at the Lord's Supper.

- Position 1: Some who are opposed to children's participation at the supper have argued not only against having children participate who have not made profession of faith, but also against having younger children make an age-appropriate profession of faith (despite the action of Synod 1995, which allowed for the age-appropriate profession of faith of young children).
- Position 2: Some are simply calling for younger children to make an age-appropriate profession of faith, with a decision about their participation entrusted to the council of the congregation (a position that Synod 1995 already endorsed).
- Position 3: Some are advocating that children should be able to partake of the bread and cup before making a formal public profession of faith, but after reaching an age in which they are able to understand that the bread and cup offer us participation in Christ's body and blood, with a decision about their participation entrusted to parents or guardians.
- Position 4: Some are advocating that all baptized members should receive the bread and cup, regardless of their level of understanding. This position would allow for infant communion.

We note that Synod's decision in 2006 has unwittingly contributed to this confusion. The main recommendation of Synod 2006 "that synod allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper on the basis of their full membership in the covenant community" by itself clearly allows for position 4 above.

However, the explanatory note added after the third ground complicates matters. The note reads as follows:

The essential question is: What is evidence of faith in a covenant member? The very act of hearing the "invitation" to communion and responding in faith by participating is an age-appropriate expression of knowing that communion is about being part of a community that receives the gift of life from the Jesus who said, "Let the little children come to me."

*(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 730)*

This clearly implies that the children must have a basic level of understanding, position 3 above.

We note that confusion among these positions has stymied communication throughout the denomination and even contributed to confusion in synodical deliberations.

Our committee welcomes communication with congregations whose practices are other than the four positions cited above.

### III. Preliminary observations

#### A. *1 Corinthians 11*

In our mandate section a, we note that synod has requested an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture passages and a discussion of the Reformed confessions. In doing so, we note that among our churches there are different ways of interpreting 1 Corinthians 11, and so we will engage the church in a careful study of all relevant material. We note there are over thirty new publications on this passage and issue by Reformed writers since the decision of 1995 was made.

We also note that deliberations about the issue of children at the Lord's Supper quickly leads to some very complex and nuanced arguments about the relationship of baptism to the Lord's Supper, the relationship of the Old and New Testaments, and how the context of the church of Corinth shapes our exegesis of this text. During the next year we intend to produce a written report on these topics for the church's reflection, with a particular view toward discussions in church councils, preaching, and Bible studies. We are working to learn from and critique the very best academic studies of these texts, but our aim is to produce a document for a wide audience. It is our prayer that this process will be instructive for all of us in learning and teaching principles of Reformed exegesis.

Even as we wrestle with the implications of this text for the specific question of children at the table, we are eager to help the church find rich implications for its life that come with a full and positive application of 1 Corinthians 11. We are beginning to ask, "What are all the life-giving ways to obey this passage, and how will this obedience enrich the life of the church?" However we approach the question of whether public profession of faith is required prior to participation at the table, it seems very clear that this must not be our only response to the command that we "examine ourselves" and "discern the body." We are eager to invite the denomination to dwell with these life-giving commands over the next several months, and to reflect together on the entire constellation of practices that help us participate in the Lord's Supper with joy, mutual accountability, and spiritual discernment. In this process we will welcome the input and reflections of the churches, including ideas for preaching and teaching.

#### B. *Congregational practices*

In our mandate section b we note that synod desires that we examine and report on how CRC congregations are observing its previous decisions and what practices of faith formation are currently in practice. To this end, we have reviewed several hundred comments included in the survey on children at the Lord's Supper conducted by the 2006 task force (summarized in the *Agenda for Synod 2007*, pp. 61-63), and we have begun a series of focus group conversations with representatives of several congregations. Even in these initial explorations, we have quickly observed great diversity in

the churches in their practices on these matters, a fair amount of confusion about which is the current position of the CRC, and the need for clarification, discussion, and preparation of tools for use. We have noticed that practices with profession of faith are widely divergent, but we are heartened by the widespread hunger for vital practices, and we aim to provide information concerning the best practices for churches to consider.

One particular theme that stands out for us is the great desire in many contexts for renewed attention to profession of faith, regardless of a given congregation's position on the topic of children at the Lord's Supper. We have already discerned creative work in several congregations to revitalize profession of faith through, for example, mentorship relationships with children and young people, intergenerational catechism classes, proactive pastoral work to encourage children and young people to profess their faith. As our work continues, we hope to assist congregations throughout the denomination in sharing pastoral wisdom with each other around this topic, in close communication with Faith Alive Christian Resources, Dynamic Youth Ministries, and CRC-related colleges and campus ministries.

Another theme that stands out for us is the importance of helping congregations address parents, guardians, and participants in children's and youth ministry about this topic. The ultimate audience for our committee's work is not simply synod, nor even church councils, but rather all of those who parent children and youth, and all of those who work in children's and youth ministry. Communication with this wide audience is most effectively done locally, and thus we hope that we can do our work so as to strengthen local efforts.

### *C. Cultural context*

We sense that our mandate also requires that we turn our attention to an identification of the issues in our culture that are affecting the life of our churches on the matter of faith formation and sacramental participation. So we have begun to explore how the church and its life today is being shaped by cultural factors more than we perhaps are aware of. Taking time to discern the spirits of the present age will no doubt uncover complex cultural dynamics, including some dynamics that we must resist and others that present significant ministry opportunities. We hope that the work of our committee will guide the denomination in learning how to work together as we engage in theological reflection on contemporary cultural dynamics and the practice of faithful ministry. As we do so, we prayerfully hope that this process will strengthen the denomination for faithful witness and mission.

The fact is that while John Calvin encouraged younger participation in the Lord's Supper, heightened discussion on this issue among Reformed churches has ensued only in the past thirty years. We believe that this can be explained in some measure by the nature of the times in which we live. In these challenging times, rather than postponing reception of the Lord's Supper until graduation from high school or later (if ever), it makes good biblical sense for covenant children to be prepared for and included in this important means of grace prior to pubescence (as decided by Synod 1995).

In fact, as the committee begins to exegete the culture, it is becoming clear that the need for vital faith formation in the lives of our children and youth is more urgent than ever. For example, the brokenness of the family, the

fragmentation of society at large, the marginalization of the church, the radical shift from a word-centered to an image-centered culture, not to mention the myriads of “isms” shaping culture (consumerism, anti-authoritarianism, pluralism, and so forth) are powerful forces competing with the church’s mission and tearing at the hearts and faith-life of our children and youth.

There are ways the church can combat and/or take advantage of these cultural trends. For example, around the Lord’s Table, the entire congregation gathers as a family united and centered in Christ. This can provide a powerful sense of belonging, being “at home,” and an opportunity to experience healing from the brokenness and fragmentation of contemporary culture. By the same token, failing to include children today may send an ambivalent message in our visual age that, though they bear the mark of baptism, they do not *really* belong. This important visual means of grace also serves to strengthen the impact of the church’s value system in a pluralistic society.

However, the complex dynamics of our culture demand so much more than providing a place for younger children at the Lord’s Table. Synod 1995’s decision must be seen in the context of the need for a full-orbed faith formation effort by the church— all its members pulsating with a vibrant public profession of their faith in Christ. Such a profession equips the church to go out and fulfill its mission to reach those in need and to transform all of culture to the glory of God. Your committee will continue to examine current cultural issues and provide the denomination with recommendations for contending with antithetical cultural forces as well as recommendations on using cultural trends to the positive spiritual advantage of the church.

#### *D. Denomination-wide efforts*

As we begin our work, we note with gratitude the work of many individual leaders, congregations, agencies, and educational institutions in creative work related to our mandate. These include but are not limited to

1. The Year of Faith Formation – Resources are already available at [www.crcna.org/pages/fa\\_walkon\\_resources.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/fa_walkon_resources.cfm).
2. Dynamic Youth Ministries
3. Faith Alive Christian Resources, in particular through the publication of:
  - Several recent articles in *Reformed Worship* and *The Banner*.
  - *The Baptism of Children: A Guide for Parents*.
  - *Children’s Profession of Faith Kit*.
  - *I Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith*.
  - *Quest of Faith: Understanding What You Confess*.
  - *Together All God’s People: Integrating Children and Youth into the Life of Your Church*.
  - *Disciples: A Multi-year Faith Formation Program for Adults*.
4. Christian Schools International, and especially their “nurturing faith” blog: [www.csionline.org/resources/community/nurturing\\_faith\\_blog](http://www.csionline.org/resources/community/nurturing_faith_blog) and/or <http://nurturingfaith.wordpress.com>.
5. Continuing Education sessions at various “Days of Encouragement,” “Googling Youth,” and so forth.

6. The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.
7. The Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.
8. Calvin Theological Seminary publications, such as *The Forum*.
9. Recent publications by CRC authors, including
  - Robert J. Keeley, *Helping Our Children Grow in Faith: How the Church Can Nurture the Spiritual Development of Kids*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008.
  - Howard Vanderwell, ed. *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, Herndon, Va., The Alban Institute, 2008.

We encourage local congregations to become aware of these initiatives, to study these materials in small group and other educational sessions, and to communicate with our committee about other initiatives and opportunities. We will continue to update this list as materials become available throughout our work.

#### IV. Our workplan

##### A. Communication

A significant portion of our mandate by synod is to enhance and deepen communication throughout the denomination about these important matters. To this end, we envision carrying out our work through several means:

1. Website – We are developing plans for a site that will gather recent publications, information about our committee’s work, practices in other Reformed denominations, and relevant teaching materials. Our intention is that the development of this website will be incremental. Phase one will provide information and resources. Phase two will include communication between our committee and congregations, classes, and individuals in other organizations. Phase three will become more interactive and possibly include webinars.
2. Pastoral and theological reflection – Inviting church councils, classes, and synod to engage in pastoral discernment, theological reflection, and the sharing of best practices. We begin with some very general questions:
  - What needs and opportunities do you discern in your congregation with respect to the faith formation of children and young people, especially related to profession of faith and participation in the Lord’s Supper?
  - What are the specific practices that lead your congregation into joyful obedience of the commands in 1 Corinthians 11 to examine yourselves and discern the body? How might your congregation more intentionally deepen those practices in spiritually life-giving ways?

We sent each church council a memo in February 2008 inviting this reflection. We encourage classes and synod to engage in this discussion. Our prayer is that each congregation, classis, and synod will find these conversations to be a source of encouragement and mutual accountability. We urge each council and classis to think about these conversations not simply as



something for the sake of a denominational committee, but rather for the sake of strengthening local ministry. Indeed, we sense that these questions are crucial for each congregation to ask on a regular basis. Asking them together as a denomination can help us strengthen local ministry as well as the relationships that bind us together as a denomination.

3. Correspondents – To facilitate rapid and widespread communication throughout the denomination, we are in the process of identifying a group of correspondents to represent CRC classes, agencies, and educational institutions.

In addition to these strategies, we have begun a process of meeting with focus groups to engage in conversation about these topics, to review the possibility of conducting education sessions via the internet, and to offer materials for educational sessions at various conferences across the United States and Canada.

#### *B. Addressing the issues*

According to the instruction of Synod 2007, we are working on reports which will help the denomination address the topics of profession of faith, children at the Lord's Supper, the understanding of 1 Corinthians 11, and we are responding to requests from parents for infant dedication. We are working on reports on these topics which will be presented to the churches for review ahead of synodical discussions. At the time of this report (February 2008), we hope to have a first report available by the fall of 2008, with additional or supplemental reports available each subsequent year within our five-year mandate. We have begun to discern a variety of formats in which the issues can be addressed, including documents for synodical consideration, study guides for churches, talking points for councils and classes, and sample materials that councils can use in communicating with parents, guardians, and leaders in children's and youth ministries.

Already we find ourselves catching a vision for a better understanding and revitalization of profession of faith, and making our profession of faith a way of life which reflects our rich heritage and strengthens our contemporary witness. To aid the church in understanding 1 Corinthians 11, we intend to identify the various approaches to this passage and the key considerations for understanding it. We note the decision of Synod 2007 about the matter of infant dedication and will develop guidelines to aid pastors and elders in dealing with such requests that come.

It is our intention to produce documents that will be very usable for discussion, training, and learning on each of these key issues.

#### **V. The significance of these issues**

In conclusion, we want to ask for expectant prayers from the denomination about this process. We sadly acknowledge that fewer youth and young adults are choosing to remain in the CRC. We are called to address specific questions, about which there are divergent opinions and a fair amount of confusion. We are also challenged to invite the denomination to mutual accountability, encouragement, study, and prayer about the entire sequence and process by which we strive to minister among our children and youth and affirm lifelong learning and faith formation.



We also reiterate our request to the denomination for communication with us about several matters.

Throughout this preliminary report we have invited communication to our committee about several things:

1. Congregations whose practices are other than the four positions we have cited.
2. Additional denominational initiatives and materials regarding faith formation and sacramental participation to supplement the list we have compiled above.
3. Response to the question “What needs and opportunities do you discern in your congregation with respect to the faith formation of children and young people, especially related to profession of faith and participation in the Lord’s Supper?”
4. Response to the questions “What are the specific practices that lead your congregation into joyful obedience of the commands in 1 Corinthians 11 to examine yourselves and discern the body? How might your congregation more intentionally deepen those practices in spiritually life-giving ways?”

## **VI. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. John Witvliet, Dr. Howard Vanderwell, and Dr. H. David Schuringa when this material is discussed.

B. That Synod 2008 allocate a discussion period for pastoral discernment, theological reflection, and sharing of best practices that would take place during a luncheon on one of the days of synod. We would request that the luncheon be held at the Prince Conference Center around tables, with a guided discussion among the delegates of synod at each table.

### *Grounds:*

1. Synod 2007 grounded its mandate to us with encouragement to “shepherd a healthy theological dialogue within the denomination over time” (see ground e). In addition, section e of our mandate calls for us to serve as a “resource for discussion of these topics at a congregational and classical level.” It seems wise that this dialog and discussion begin with synod.
2. Synod represents a unique opportunity for such open discussion. The “Rules for Synodical Procedure” introduce the *Rules of Order* by noting, “Our synods should therefore not be bound to observe detailed parliamentary rules. These may be proper in other gatherings, but they do not fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical assemblies, which demand a large measure of freedom in discussion and action.”

C. That synod encourage the churches and classes to engage in earnest prayer and discussion on these key matters and communicate with the committee as requested.

Faith Formation Committee

Irene Bakker

Andrew Chun

Jill Friend

Syd Hielema

Pat Nederveld

H. David Schuringa

Howard Vanderwell, secretary

John D. Witvliet, chairperson

Gerard Dykstra, ex officio

## **I. Background**

The history of the functioning of the Form of Subscription (FOS) in the Christian Reformed Church is a story about our denomination's determination to be and remain a confessional church. This is highlighted in the narrative of the history of the FOS as given in Report 38 of the *Acts of Synod 1976*, which concludes with this sentence: "It may be said that the adoption and use of the traditional FOS has been an integral part of the CRC's history as an orthodox, conservative, confessional church" (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 561).

We believe two assumptions underlie this determination. The first is that a confessional church's identity and mission always arise out of a specific heritage of understanding ("standing under") the Scripture. In the case of the CRC, this heritage is the interpretation of Scripture as given in the historic creeds of the early church: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed; as well as the confessions of the church of the Reformation: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, sometimes referred to as the three forms of unity. These creeds and confessions were acknowledged to be so constitutive of our identity and so critical to our mission in the world that continuity with them had to be preserved. In other words, the church believed it had to remain orthodox in order to be the church.

The second assumption is that a regulating instrument was needed in order to keep the CRC orthodox as it began a new denomination in a new world. From its beginning in 1857 the CRC adopted the FOS, essentially unchanged from its initial draft at the 1619 Synod of Dort, as this regulating instrument. This action was formalized in 1861. This assumption is evident in the statement made by Synod 1976 in its response to the overture of Dr. Harry Boer that

The form [of subscription] is not intended primarily as the instrument by which the church examines its confessions in the light of Scripture and provides for the orderly revision of the confessions. It is rather the instrument for safeguarding the administration of the Word and the government of the church in harmony with the confessions. . . .

*(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 577)*

Our committee believes that from 1976 on, the history of the FOS indicates that the first assumption remains true (that a church's identity and mission arise out of a specific heritage) while the second (that a regulatory instrument is needed to keep us orthodox) is increasingly being called into question. Increased cultural and ethnic diversity, the increase in new church plants, and the cultural movement often described as postmodernism are among the factors raising these questions.

It is our committee's view that the question of how to retain the same truths that give us unity, while allowing and indeed encouraging the church to give ongoing expression to those truths throughout the course of history, continues to be the issue at the root of much of the current discussion regarding the place and function of the FOS in the CRC today. We are committed not only to the truths expressed in the creeds of the church; we also wish to encourage contemporary expression of these truths so that we may truly declare with joy and trust that our world, today, belongs to God.

Synod has exhibited this very commitment. As a part of its response to the overture of Dr. Harry Boer, Synod 1976 (*Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 68-69) set out guidelines prescribing what the FOS does not mean to say regarding these truths we confess. Though these guidelines have now been part of Church Order Supplement, Article 5, for over three decades, they do not appear to be sufficient for people who perceive difficulties in signing the FOS.

The FOS was intended to ensure the integrity of leadership in the offices of the church so that the standard of purity as stated in the confessions would be preserved. Despite this good intent, however, the FOS has also functioned, with its silencing language, to make discussion of confessional issues difficult rather than normal and necessary. The variety of issues with signing the Form of Subscription that have come up, as well as ongoing attempts to change it, indicate that officebearers today seek to be guided by—not silenced by—the FOS in their understanding of the confessions.

The committee notes the following developments since 1976. In 1981, the wording of the FOS was challenged as being ineffective for use in a cultural situation considerably different from that at the beginning of the CRC. As a result, modifications were made in the translation of the FOS in order to make it more meaningful in the Native American languages of the Navajo and Zuni people.

Yet, when an overture offered by Mr. Herman Bouma came to Synod 1987 to simplify the wording of the FOS for the entire church, it was rejected—though it is true that a year later Synod 1988 did adopt some minimal changes to make the wording of the FOS more contemporary.

Ten years later, however, Synod 1998 once again rejected an overture to revise the wording of the FOS, this time from Classis Thornapple Valley. Its proposal to revise the line, *all the articles and points of doctrine* set forth in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort *fully agree* with the Word of God as stated in the current FOS (*Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 202), called for a much more substantial revision of the FOS than any that had been requested since 1976. The overture also sought to require different forms for elders and deacons and for ministers and professors of theology (*Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 203). Synod's denial, given on the grounds that the regulations approved by Synod 1976 had adequately addressed the problem of *fully agree* and that the promise to *teach diligently* is already open to interpretation of one's role (*Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 425, 426), once again appeared to affirm that the existing FOS was as valid and necessary for the church as it had been in the past.

Many people in the church continued to wrestle with this issue. In 2003 as a part of a dissertation for his master of theology degree at Calvin Theological Seminary, Rev. Ken Nydam sent out a survey to seventy new church development (NCD) pastors and fifty established church development (ECD) pastors within the CRC, seventy of which were returned (*An Historical and Theological Assessment of the Problems with the Form of Subscription in New Church Development in the Christian Reformed Church in North America* [Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 2003]). Nydam concluded that while all churches want to retain some kind of doctrinal covenant for the CRC, many churches also wonder "if a document that was originally conceived in a historical context of intra-church skirmishes that

had political ramifications can be applied to our contemporary mission environment” (Nydam 2003, 13).

In 2003, Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, British Columbia (Classis B.C. South-East), overtured Synod 2004 to study the efficacy of the Form of Subscription on the grounds that many churches in that classis no longer used the FOS because many individuals had difficulty signing it. Classis B.C. South-East wrote, “When a tool such as the Form of Subscription becomes ineffective in our culture and time, a study into the reasons and attempts to once again make it effective is justified” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435).

Synod 2004 did not accede to the overture but in response to Overture 21, B, 2 stated:

Sensing that the overture of Classis B.C. South-East raises issues with respect to compliance with the provisions of Church Order Article 5 among our churches, Advisory Committee 8 requests that synod instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to inquire of each congregation as to the methods by which the churches comply with the provisions of Article 5 and refer the results of such inquiry to Synod 2005 for whatever action Synod 2005 may deem appropriate.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 633)

In late 2004, the general secretary’s office sent out a survey to all of the CRC churches. The BOT referred the results of the survey to Synod 2005, and, based on its review of the survey data, made the following recommendations:

1. That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2006 for consideration and possible adoption,
2. That the proposed revision be drafted by a committee appointed by the Board of Trustees,
3. That the draft of a proposed revision be sent to the churches no later than January 1, 2006, and,
4. That the text of the proposed revision be printed in the *Agenda for Synod 2006*.

*Grounds:*

- a. The survey conducted among the churches indicates that a substantial number of churches believe that an update is desirable.
- b. The present form of the Form of Subscription contains statements that are subject to misinterpretation.
- c. A more contemporary expression of agreement will make the requirement more meaningful.

(*Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 619, 627-28)

## II. Our mandate

In response to the BOT’s report and recommendations, Synod 2005 adopted the following recommendations:

That synod adopt the following recommendations with reference to the Form of Subscription (BOT Supplement, section I, H):

1. That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2007 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription.
2. That the proposed revision of the Form of Subscription be drafted by a committee appointed by the Board of Trustees.
3. In their work, we encourage the committee to take note of the guidelines as to the meaning of subscription found in the Church Order Supplements (2004 edition, p. 26).

4. That the draft of a proposed revision be sent to the churches no later than January 1, 2007.

*Grounds:*

- a. The survey conducted among the churches indicates that a substantial number of churches believe that an update is desirable.
- b. The present Form of Subscription contains statements that are subject to misinterpretation.
- c. A more contemporary expression of agreement will make the requirements more meaningful.

*(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 735)*

### **III. The process used by the current committee**

The present committee was appointed by the BOT in response to the recommendation of Synod 2005. The committee convened in February 2006. In addition to meeting regularly, the committee took up contact with several other people concerning our mandate, in order to broaden our input. These included: Dr. Michael Goheen, Rev. Morris Greidanus, Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, Rev. Kenneth Nydam, Dr. John Stek, and the late Dr. George VanderVelde. Their input has been of great assistance to us.

Synod 2005 appointed a committee to revise the Contemporary Testimony, and Synod 2006 encouraged the study of the Belhar Confession and its consideration as a confession in our own denomination. The committee was aware of these matters as we went about our work.

In August 2007 an initial draft of our work, having been approved by the BOT for forwarding to the churches, was sent out for the churches' review and response. By December 31, 2007, over 130 churches and individuals had given their time to carefully review this draft and respond to it. The committee is thankful for all these responses and has given careful consideration to them in this report. It is of some concern to the committee that very few responses came from emerging churches and none from ethnic-minority churches.

### **IV. Rationale for the proposed Form of Subscription rewrite**

We confess that Scripture is the Word of God. It is utterly trustworthy and reliable in all issues pertaining to faith and life. However, our understanding of it is always limited and in need of restatement. In the words of missiologist Lesslie Newbigin,

The responsibility of the church is to declare to each generation what is the faith. This is always a fresh task in every generation. No verbal statement can be produced which relieves the Church of the responsibility continually to re-think and re-state its message. No appeal to creeds and confessions can alter the fact that the Church has to state in every new generation how it interprets the historic faith and how it relates to the new thought and experience of its time. It belongs to the essence of a living Church that it should be able and willing to do so.

*(The Reunion of the Church: A Defense of the South India Scheme, London: SCM, 1948, pp. 137-38)*

The four-hundred year old FOS has traditionally been viewed as being the hallmark of a confessional church. It is perhaps ironic that under the current FOS's watch a significant and increasing inattention to the confessions has occurred in many parts of the CRC. The many years of conflicted discussion

about the FOS in the CRC reveal the need for a doctrinal covenant more in harmony with current realities. We must be concerned with both historical integrity and its current expression as we move forward.

Our committee believes that one way to view the confessions is to regard them as true snapshots in time of the church's understanding of what it heard God saying in Scripture in the context of the issues confronting it. Understood in this way, the confessions offer deeply grounded guidance to the contemporary church by linking us to the past and reminding us to pay attention to "the good deposit that was entrusted to [us]" (2 Timothy 1:14). Of course it is critical that along with a good defense of what we have received, there must also be ongoing reflection and development as the church constantly seeks to explain what faithfulness to the gospel looks like in its time and place. Paul makes this clear also when he goes on to say we must "guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us." Synod itself recognized this not only when it received *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a guide for the church in the modern context (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 408) but also when it called for an update of that testimony because it serves "as a dynamic statement of faith [that] must periodically be reviewed and perhaps revised if it is to speak contemporaneously" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 734).

The church is a community of believers which by nature must continually reflect on its identity and mission in the light of Scripture and its context. Therefore, any regulatory instrument that is adopted by the church ought to be regarded as an invitation to the officebearers of the church to participate in this ongoing reflection rather than as a document that precludes or hinders such reflection. To this end, we recommend, first, that the title of this document be *A Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers* rather than *Form of Subscription* because it outlines the communal nature of the responsibilities and blessings of ordination and encourages participation as well as regulation. While we recognize that professors of theology and pastors have a particularly vital role in guarding the confessional deposit, love, concern, and support for that deposit rightly belongs to all officebearers.

In this revised covenant, our primary subscription is to the Scriptures that we receive as "holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith" (Belgic Confession, Art. 5). In an era of relativism, we emphasize the divine authority and universal validity of Scripture. Nothing must be allowed to mute the voice of Scripture in the life of the church. Our own confessions affirm that "we must not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings . . . or . . . above the truth of God" (Belgic Confession, Art. 7).

That the gospel comes to believers in particular times and places is of course true. Our confessions arose in a time of competing Christian traditions when confessions were written to clarify differences and to defend against error; thus maintaining the purity of a particular tradition. Insights gained at such times must not be lost. And it will never cease to be the historical fact and blessing that the Three Forms of Unity retain pride of place because of their seminal role in the birth of our Reformed confessional tradition.

We must remain committed to the tradition of our historic confessions by continuing to attend to what they attended to both by defending and



promoting them. To remain a truly confessional church, the confessions need to function significantly in our various callings, helping us to deepen our understanding of Scripture in our Reformed tradition.

As Synod 2005 recognized, there is a continuing need for fresh, contextualized, theological reflection that addresses the culture of our time. For this reason, the committee includes *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* in our Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers as a testimony of faith for our times (Acts of Synod 1986, p. 679).

The church has long realized that few church leaders can with integrity state that they agree fully with every jot and tittle of the historical confessions. Issues have included the revelations of ongoing scholarship that do not coincide with earlier understandings as well as the factors referred to previously in the background section. The twenty-first century church's growing awareness of its responsibility before Christ Jesus, the Lord of history, to rethink and restate his gospel in this time and place significantly increases this need.

The church has responded in various ways in the past to the need for contemporary expression of the gospel: Article 36 of the Belgic Confession was substantially revised a century ago; in 1976 confessional-difficulty gravamens were added to confessional-revision gravamens along with the guidelines we have noted previously; and, as recently as 2006, a portion of the Heidelberg Catechism was placed in brackets with a footnote added to explain the change. All of these underline the historical character of our confessions. Our committee believes, therefore, that recognition of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a testimony of faith for our times is very important in the new doctrinal covenant. This testimony carries forward our Reformed tradition of understanding ("standing under") the Scripture in our own time and place in a way that our denomination has wholeheartedly endorsed.

In our proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers, the obligations as officebearers are treated both positively and humbly. The removal of silencing language, which has led so many churches and church members to simply ignore the FOS, creates a positive climate in which leaders can discerningly use the complex theological statements of the historic confessions as they continually reflect on the identity of the church in the light of Scripture and its contemporary context.

A flexible assumption has been built into the wording of this covenant. It is our committee's firm belief that in the light of new discoveries, such as stem cell research, and new challenges, for example from radical Islam, new expressions of our faith *will be* required. It is also our belief that our expressions of the gospel must be open to insights we gain from sisters and brothers around the world.

Our committee believes that our reformulation of the FOS accurately reflects the current situation and concerns in the churches. Our prayer is that we as a denomination will be able to discern between essentials and nonessentials and to continue growing as a vigorous, *living* branch of the living church. Adopting a more flexible covenant for officebearers may be a small step in that direction.



Finally, we also deeply feel that no confession, nor a required subscription to that confession, can, on its own, bring about unity or interest in our particular theological heritage. We need to intentionally teach and sing and speak confessionally, weaving our confessions into the fabric of our lives, around dinner tables and campfires as well as in church services. To that end, we present the following revision for the consideration of the churches.

### **A Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA**

We, the undersigned officebearers of the CRCNA, heartily accept the authority of the Word of God as received in the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which reveal the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ, namely the reconciliation of all things in him, and we submit to them in all matters of life and faith.

We accept the historic confessions: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, as the church's faithful expressions of the gospel in their time which define the tradition of our Reformed understanding of Scripture and continue to direct us today.

With thankfulness for these expressions of faith we promise to be shaped and governed by them and to promote them in our various callings: preaching, teaching, writing, and serving; making grateful use of the church's testimony of faith for our time, *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

Should we at any time come to believe that the witness of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the above documents has become irreconcilable to the Holy Scriptures, we will communicate our views to the church according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its Supplements and promise to submit to its judgment.

We honor this covenant out of a desire to remain rooted in and to engage with our tradition so that we will be diligent in living out this witness today to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **V. Recommendations**

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Rev. John Van Schepen, chair, and Rev. Mark Davies when matters pertaining to the Form of Subscription Revision Committee Report are discussed.

B. That synod adopt the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers as presented or recommit it to the committee for further work.

C. That following adoption of the Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers, synod dismiss the committee with thanks.

Form of Subscription Revision Committee

Walter Ackerman, reporter

Mark Davies

John Koster

Pat Storteboom

Wilma van der Leek

John Van Schepen, chair

Albert Westerhuis

# OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

**Overture 1: Observe Elim Sunday in October 2008**

Classis Chicago South overtures Synod 2008 to adopt, by way of exception, the proposal to endorse the observation of Elim Sunday on October 12, 2008, in honor of the 60th anniversary of Elim Christian Services and its mutually beneficial relationship with the CRC.

*Grounds:*

1. The breadth of Elim's influence goes beyond the local area.
2. Its ministry is unique and is Christ-centered.
3. It is recognized by state and federal agencies via funding.
4. Its student population represents a wide demographic area.
5. It promotes a broader issue—disability concerns for the entire denomination—something that synod has recently encouraged.
6. It has appeal to the broader local community.

Classis Chicago South  
Richard E. Williams, stated clerk

**Overture 2: Encourage the Practice of an Evening Worship Service****I. Background**

The Christian Reformed Church has historically been a denomination that has held two distinct worship services on the Lord's Day. We note that this was a practice which began in the Netherlands following the Reformation, a practice which has a bearing on the CRC due to the Dutch roots of our denomination. This practice of holding two distinct worship services on a Sunday began principally in response to the great need among the people to receive training and instruction about the important doctrines found in the pages of Scripture. Along the way, the Heidelberg Catechism was developed into 52 Lord's Days so that the churches in the Reformed tradition might be able to preach through the Catechism in a year, with one Sunday worship service each week having a doctrinal sermon.

This practice was faithfully carried over to the United States and became a part of the CRC's Church Order from the very beginning, that Christian Reformed churches were to hold two distinct worship services every Sunday. Oftentimes during the transition from the Dutch language to the English language, CRCs held four worship services on a Sunday: a morning and an evening in English, and a morning and an evening in Dutch. Such was the importance to these Christians, their councils, and their ministers, of

gathering together with the saints for hearing the preached Word, for partaking of the sacraments, for singing of the Psalms, for prayer, and for offerings.

Even during the turbulent societal shifts of the 1960s, the importance of two preaching services was reinforced, and the practice of holding two preaching worship services continued. A worship service and preaching went hand in hand. In 1964, for example, synod appointed its Liturgical Committee to in part “study liturgical usages and practices in our churches in the light of Reformed liturgical principles and past synodical decisions . . .” (*Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 59). As a result, a study report was presented to Synod 1968. In their report, the committee noted a number of items concerning the importance of the sermon in the liturgy of the church’s worship. They wrote, “The sermon is the core of the Christian liturgy. Along with the reading of Scripture, it both anchors worship in the revelation of God and directs it toward life and its responsibilities in the present time” (*Acts of Synod 1968*, p.175). Likewise, the proclamation of the Word was defined to be an inexpendable ingredient to worship.

As Reformed Christians, we are convinced that when that proclaimed Word is rooted in the Reformed tradition, which the creeds and confessions have inked for us as a confessional church, that tradition helps us avoid novelty and reminds us of the essential truths of God’s Word. Truths that keep us from the deadly error of heresy, of false worship, and of a loveless faith. Truths that unite us and give us common ground from which to approach God’s Word and the culture in which we live. Truths that transform lives, as the full counsel of God’s Word is proclaimed.

And yet, we find ourselves becoming further splintered as a denomination and more congregationalistic, a trend lamented at times in our denomination’s publication *The Banner* as well as in the different agencies of the church and Faith Alive Christian Resources (as they work to convince Christian Reformed congregations to purchase their Sunday school and catechism materials). We find a growing distance between congregations and classes, as we go our own separate ways not only in practice but also in doctrine.

Current evidence of our growing distance, with its lack of doctrinal cohesion and understanding of what our confessions teach regarding God’s Word, is the turmoil over the Form of Subscription. When officebearers in churches and classes no longer feel it necessary or agreeable to sign our Form of Subscription, it is wondered how much of that is due to a lack of understanding and knowledge because we are not preaching or teaching such things the way we used to from our pulpits. How much further training in the doctrines of Scripture, of the beauty of our triune God and his wonderful workings of grace, has been lost to a generation or more because churches have abandoned their evening catechetical and doctrinal-themed preaching services?

No doubt there is the presence of despair in our churches, wondering if God’s Word truly does change lives, whether it truly is a means of grace. Churches have seen a decline of evening worship service attendance by families, prompting some to come up with something else on Sunday evenings to keep the people coming. Perhaps it is wondered, Is God’s Word, when proclaimed by an ordained minister, truly a means of grace? Are lives truly changed? An obvious conclusion is that many consistories and ministers

have grown weary and discouraged, questioning this very thing, for many churches have abandoned their evening worship services.

How many? A quick survey of the 2007 *Yearbook* shows a large number of existing and new congregations that have either abandoned a Sunday evening worship service or never implemented one. For example, to glance at a classis from Western Michigan (a classis that has been in existence since 1888) is to note that, out of its 24 congregations (19 established, 5 emerging), 11 of these do not have an evening worship service. These 11 are a mixture of long-standing congregations and emerging congregations. Some of these congregations note in the *Yearbook* that they have small groups or a family night in place of an evening worship service. Others have noted nothing, only listing a morning worship service time.

This example is given to illustrate a growing trend in our denomination, and no doubt a detailed study of other classes in our denomination would yield similar findings. And while Synod 1995 instructed classes to hold congregations accountable when they decide to explore alternatives to the second service, how is this being done, or to what extent? Indeed, in certain classes, when almost half of the participating churches no longer hold an evening worship service, what kind of accountability if any is being kept when another congregation in that classis decides to drop the evening worship service? Will one congregation that has abandoned the evening worship service encourage a new church plant to institute one, or discourage another congregation from abandoning theirs?

Is it a growing problem in our churches that we no longer in faith trust the simplicity and power of God's Word and the Holy Spirit working through it to change lives and call out God's elect? Do we no longer think it possible to preach to today's culture about that personal message of sin, salvation, and service from the 52 Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism? Will a post-modern culture no longer listen to God speaking, so that we must abandon it and try new things? And yet, as Reformed Christians, we know and are convinced that God's holy and divine Word *has* the power to change lives.

The Belgic Confession teaches us in Article 2, for instance, that God "makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own." Or, when we as Christians go through times of doubt and temptation in life, the Canons of Dort, Fifth Point, Article 14 speak these words of wisdom: "And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments." But the means of grace, as identified here in section V, 14, are found in the formal worship services of the church.

As we continue to move into a post-church age here in North America, the members of our churches are in need of further training in God's Word and the doctrines of the Reformed faith, not less. Our North American culture is in greater measure losing the ability to reinforce biblical stories, teachings, and mores. In fact, families often complain of the difficulty in today's age to communicate the faith to the next generation, due to the culture's subtle and not-so-subtle hostility to the teachings of grace. This is a growing problem in our culture that continues to negatively impact our churches as well. As a

classis, we see much wisdom in retaining the principle and practice of worshipping twice on the Lord's Day.

## II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2008 to

A. Call all the churches to a return to a faithful practice of worshipping twice on the Lord's Day, to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

*Grounds:*

1. This is in accordance with Church Order Article 51-a.
2. This is in accordance with the decision of Synod 1995, which affirmed "the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day" and encouraged "existing congregations to continue and new congregations to embrace this tradition for the building up of the body of Christ" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 766).
3. In today's culture with its creeping relativism, our members need *more* training in God's Word and the blessings that the means of grace alone can bring, not less.
4. Since we live in community as a denomination, when an increasing number of churches abandon their evening worship services, it becomes dispiriting for the remaining churches to continue with theirs.
5. There is much to be gained by having two distinct worship services on a Lord's Day, and much that is lost when there is not (see Report 38, *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 505ff).

B. Instruct *The Banner* to regularly report on and write stories about the joys and triumphs that churches in the denomination have found by holding two distinct preaching worship services on the Lord's Day.

*Grounds:*

1. Philippians 1:3-11: "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 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 and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."
2. As a denomination, we live in community, and therefore, it is good to celebrate the joys and triumphs of God's Word living and breathing within the life of his church, so that we might be built up and encouraged to continue in the right.

C. Instruct Christian Reformed Home Missions to work with the Faith Formation Committee on how they might more effectively encourage our church plants to implement a second worship service on the Lord's Day.

*Grounds:*

1. This fits well with the mandate Synod 2007 gave to the Faith Formation Committee as it deals with the application of those means of grace of the Lord's Supper and baptism in the formation of faith in our covenant youth, means of grace which are present only in formal worship services.
2. Church plants oftentimes struggle in discipling those new to the faith (or returning to it) about the importance of many Christian practices, including that of worshiping twice on Sunday, and therefore they might find it helpful to work with the Faith Formation Committee as together they develop ways on how to best help church planters in this endeavor.
3. It is always easiest to begin good practices and establish valuable traditions at the beginning of something rather than later on; this wisdom principle applies to new churches as well.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

### **Overture 3: Ensure That Synodical Delegates Can Receive the Elements of Holy Communion from a Male Elder at Synodical Worship Services**

#### **I. Background**

At the synodical worship service for Synod 2006, the host church chose to serve the Lord's Supper by inviting worshipers to come forward to receive the bread and grape juice from elders officiating in this portion of the service. For one of the elements served, every elder serving was female.

#### **II. Overture**

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2008 to instruct host churches of the synodical worship services to ensure that delegates have the opportunity to receive the elements of Holy Communion from a male elder.

*Grounds:*

1. It violates the consciences of the great majority of our elder and pastor delegates to be served communion by a female elder whom the delegates believe is functioning in violation of Scripture.
2. Synod 1995 affirmed that there are two legitimate Reformed ways of interpreting Scripture with respect to women serving in the offices of elder and minister. Unless synod proves that the historic interpretation of Scripture is illegitimate, it should take steps whenever possible to provide for those among us who hold to this conviction. It would not be an undue hardship to carry out the request in this overture.



3. Holy Communion is a strong symbol of our unity in the Lord and should not be used by a host church of synod to impose its practices in such a way as to violate the consciences of fellow believers.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

#### **Overture 4: Establish Guidelines for Former Pastors**

*Note:* This overture pertains to ministers who, after pastoring a congregation, are called to another congregation, enter another area of ministry, or retire from active ministry. "Retirement from active ministry" means that a minister no longer serves the congregation formerly pastored. It does not apply to ministers who become emeritus and yet, in an arrangement agreed to by the council and the minister, continue to serve the congregation on a part-time basis. Nor does this overture pertain to associate pastors who have been members of a congregation for many years and retire from their service as professors, chaplains, and so forth in other organizations. It assumes that the appropriate involvement of associate pastors has been clarified during the years the associate has been a member of the congregation.

##### **I. Background**

###### *A. History of the Pastor-Church Relations Committee*

In 1978 the Synodical Interim Committee observed that there were increasing instances of stress between ministers and congregations which resulted in separations between the two parties, and synod approved continuing research "into the matter of a healing ministry for ministers, consistories, and congregations . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 28). In response to the recommendations of the Healing Ministries Committee, Synod 1982 established a Pastor-Church Relations Committee, began a mentor system for ministerial candidates and ministers who had been separated from their congregations, and encouraged the appointment of regional pastors and the establishment of a pastoral relations committee in all congregations (see *Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 76-78). Today the Office of Pastor-Church Relations continues to offer valuable assistance to pastors and congregations in these areas. One area that has not been formally addressed by our denomination is the relationship of a minister to the congregation last served before retiring or before accepting a call to another ministry in the same geographic area (for example, a professor, a chaplain, and so forth, in another organization) or to another church.

###### *B. The need for guidelines*

At times it is quite natural for pastors who retire or enter another area of service in the same geographic area to remain members of the congregation they have most recently pastored. Throughout the years both pastor and spouse have developed relationships with members, and members themselves often encourage pastors to remain among them. Sometimes the pastor has purchased a home in the community, making membership in the same congregation even more desirable. Even when a minister accepts a call to another congregation, it is natural for them to be interested in the welfare of

the congregation they are leaving. At times they become involved in the life of their former congregation either because of their own interest or because of inquiries and requests of former members.

Even though there are congregations in which the presence of the previous pastor does not cause significant difficulties, there are congregations where ministry has been severely damaged by this reality. There are pastors and members who have handled this new relationship well, and there are others who have handled it poorly. There are also situations where ministers, no longer physically present in the congregation, became inappropriately involved by offering advice or pastoral services.

Our denomination has no guidelines in this area. Thanks to a Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant, a team of CRC pastors nearing retirement met to discuss ways of assisting pastors and their spouses planning for and entering retirement. At the end of its research, the team published a booklet titled *Closing Well – Continuing Strong*. In a section titled “Ongoing relationship with your present church,” they give this advice to pastors:

If you stay in the area, you may wish to join a neighboring church if there is one nearby. It is not in the best interest of you and your spouse, the congregation, nor the next pastor to remain a member in your last church. The succeeding pastor may not always feel relaxed working in his or her predecessor’s presence.

Whether or not you decide to stay, you may consider drawing up a *covenant of separation*. In this document, you and the council would spell out the boundaries for yourself and the members. If you decide to stay, follow this safe guideline: be a faithful member and no more. You may preach when needed, but do not encourage being asked. Hospital visiting and pastoral care calls should be made by the elders and appointed visitors, and only in case of need should you make your services available in these areas. Once your successor has taken over, avoid conducting funerals and weddings (p. 26).

*C. Policies of other denominations regarding pastors who retire and who enter another form of Christian ministry in the same geographical area of the congregation they previously served*

The above comments have no official status among us. They are merely suggestions by CRC pastors who have studied this matter. Other denominations have discussed the same issue and some—for example, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PC[USA]), the Methodist Church, the Reformed Church in America, and others—have adopted specific guidelines to address it. The PC(USA) Presbytery of Lake Michigan says,

A former pastor and his or her family should seek a new congregation in which to worship, even if they are staying in the same community in retirement or as the pastor begins another kind of service. This is essential during the transition time between installed pastors. However, former pastors should be cautious about assuming that they can return to the former congregation as soon as a new pastor is called. In order to support the formation of a strong bond between the new pastor and the congregation, a former pastor should wait an appropriate amount of time before re-entering the congregation formerly served, and then only after a careful conversation with the new pastor about his or her wishes in this matter.

The Presbytery of Grand Canyon states,

Upon retirement the minister should ordinarily seek residence in a parish other than the last parish served. The former pastor and (if married) spouse

ordinarily do not attend meetings or services of worship at any former parish except for possible special occasions by invitation of the current pastor. In smaller communities or in isolated areas particularly, retired pastors and their families who stay in the area should give careful thought as to how they can genuinely support a successor pastor and spouse. At the same time the new pastor in such situations needs to be sensitive to the retired minister's human needs. Mutual respect, open communication, understanding, and a genuine concern for the other minister's welfare will help to create the climate needed for a healthy, mutually supportive relationship.

*D. Policies of other denominations regarding pastors who are called to another congregation*

These presbyteries also address the more frequent situation in which a pastor is called away from one congregation to serve another. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan says,

A former pastor of a congregation is wise to avoid conversations about what has happened in the church after her or his departure. Under no circumstances should the former pastor indicate to church members disapproval or disappointment about the decisions or leadership of the interim pastor or the newly installed pastor. The former pastor will inevitably have only partial information about any event or decision within the congregation he or she used to serve. In any case, for the former pastor to comment negatively about the current leadership of the church is unhelpful and inappropriate.

The Presbytery of Grand Canyon states,

It is understood that relationships/friendships formed during a pastorate may continue. However, after leaving the church, the former minister and spouse exercise care so as to have no further influence upon the congregation either by conversation, correspondence, or other action. Any former minister seeks to be supportive of the new pastor when comments are made about that person or any program, policies, or activities in the former church.

Section G-14.0606 in the *Book of Order* of the PC(USA) states,

Former pastors and associate pastors may officiate at services for members of a particular church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of the session.

(In Christian Reformed churches this would typically be the pastor or the secretary of the elders.)

*E. Critique of such policies*

Policies like the above exist because denominations have repeatedly discovered that the relationship of pastors to their last congregation can lead to difficulties detrimental to the congregation's health. In terms of pastors who retire or who remain in the same geographic area while entering another ministry, the strength of the PC(USA) policies cited is that they expect the former pastor and spouse to become members of another congregation. The language of both policies also allows for some (unstated) exceptions. In some cases an exception may be wise. For example, in certain areas of the country there are few Christian Reformed or Reformed churches. In some settings it may be crucial for a pastor who has planted a congregation and with whom many of the members strongly identify to remain in the congregation for some time to assist members to develop a stronger relationship to the congregation in place of a relationship to the pastor who was instrumental in their spiritual birth.

Cultural expectations in some of our ethnic communities may call for an approach different from the norm in some other communities.

On the one hand synod ought not to adopt a requirement, mandating a former pastor and spouse to become members of another congregation. Instead it should adopt a guideline and urge pastors and councils to follow it. On the other hand pastors and councils ought not to ignore the guideline because “it’s only a guideline”; nor should they automatically think that their case is an exception to the guideline. Both pastors and councils need to give careful attention to the communal wisdom of the CRC and many other denominations. The guideline should be taken seriously, and any exceptions should be carefully discussed between the pastor and the council and with a representative of classis (either the classical interim committee or the classical ministries committee).

In terms of all former pastors—those who retire, those who enter another area of ministry and remain in the same geographic area, and those who are called to another congregation—the strength of the PC(USA) policies cited is that they expect the former pastor to refrain from involvement in the ongoing life of the congregation while also placing exceptions to that guideline in the hands of the session, the body entrusted with all other affairs relating to the congregation’s health. Again, such exceptions are understandable. For example, a young adult who has been away at college when a new pastor arrives may have a strong relationship to a former pastor and may wish him/her to officiate at his/her wedding. Or an older person may have already requested that the former pastor officiate at his/her funeral service. Again, the expectation is that members will not request pastoral services from former pastors and former pastors will not offer pastoral services. If former pastors are to provide such services, they will do so only by formal invitation of the session. It seems wise to make such a covenant a requirement, not a guideline, so that the health of the congregation is enhanced.

#### *F. The broader assemblies*

Synod 2004 affirmed the decision of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to “adopt as its priority for the next five to ten years the creating and sustaining of healthy local congregations in North America” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 49; *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 557). Though this has recently received fresh emphasis, the health of our congregations and their pastoral leadership has always been a concern of the broader assemblies. Ministers are called to a congregation with the approval of a classical counselor. A person is declared a candidate for the ministry by synod and enters the ordained ministry after being examined by a classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Ministers move from one congregation to another after the classis of their current congregation and the classis of their calling congregation approve their credentials. A congregation wishing to call a minister less than a year after it has called the same minister must have the concurrence of its classis. Ministers enter specialized ministries only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that such work is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word. Ministers retire with the approval of their council and classis and in accordance with synodical regulations.

The PC(USA) policies cited earlier in this overture demonstrate the involvement of the broader assemblies in this matter. Regulations are a part of the denominational book of order, and policies are set and supervised by presbyteries, regional groupings of churches. Our synod will automatically be involved when it adopts guidelines and policies in this area, and the classis must also be involved since the continuing relationship between pastor and congregation can be a very sensitive and emotional matter. Some councils may put undue pressure on a former pastor to remain among them, and some pastors may put undue pressure on councils for the same reason, with neither party giving adequate consideration to how such an arrangement may negatively impact the future health of the congregation. At this point representatives of classis, either the classical interim committee or the classical ministries committee, people with more objectivity, can serve the congregation well. Representatives of classis need to be a part of any decision to which exceptions to a synodical guideline are granted and should sign any agreements regulating the future relationship of ministers and congregations.

#### *G. Guideline*

Synod will serve the churches well by adopting a guideline that expects ministers who retire or who enter other areas of Christian service to become members of a congregation other than the one they have last pastored and that expects congregational members to support that encouragement. There may be exceptions to this guideline, but both pastors and members should be aware that generally the departure of the previous pastor will be beneficial to the well-being of the congregation, the previous pastor, and the new pastor. Exceptions should be granted only with the concurrence of the classical interim committee or the classical ministries committee.

#### *H. Requirement*

The development of a solid relationship with the next pastor and the continuation of effective ministry are damaged when former pastors, either intentionally or unwittingly, become involved in the life of their former congregation through their words or actions. In such cases the entire congregation suffers. It is necessary for pastors and members to talk openly about this dynamic and to profit from the more objective insights of others. Synod should require that pastors and members reach a formal, written agreement on their future relationship so that the overall ministry of the congregation is well served.

The practice of many classes in our sister denomination, the Reformed Church in America, can serve us well. These classes ask pastors and councils to sign a document that explicitly outlines their future relationship, a document signed also by a representative of classis (classical interim committee or the classical ministries committee). The signed document is distributed to all members so that parties understand the nature of the new relationship. The relationship is supervised by the elders—the officebearers entrusted with all other affairs relating to the congregation's health. We believe such a document should be used by the congregations in our denomination.

## II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to

### A. Adopt the following guideline:

Normally, ministers who retire or who enter other areas of Christian service while remaining in the same geographic area are expected to become members of a congregation other than the one they last served. Members of the congregation are expected to support such a transfer. Exceptions to this guideline shall be granted only with the concurrence of the classical interim committee or the classical ministries committee.

#### *Grounds:*

1. Generally, the relationship of the congregation to the next pastor is enhanced if the previous pastor is not a member of the congregation.
2. The spiritual life and ministry of the previous pastor and spouse can flourish more easily in a new setting where their gifts, insights, and voices can be freely used.
3. Actual situations in our denomination and in others illustrate the need for such a guideline.
4. Though exceptions may be given on a case by case basis, with the concurrence of the classis, the expectation of the denomination should be clearly stated.

B. Require that the minister and the vice president of the council sign the following Covenant for Future Relationships whether or not the former pastor remains a member of the congregation. (The covenant will also be signed by a representative of classis [classical interim committee or the classical ministries committee] and will be distributed to members of the congregation so all parties are aware of the agreement.)

#### Covenant for Future Relationships

This covenant will guide the future relationship between the Rev. (name) and the (name) Church. It is designed to ensure healthy relationships following the end of the current pastoral relationship on (date), and to strengthen the future mission and ministries of this congregation. It grows out of deep gratitude for the special pastoral relationship that has developed in the past, and will develop in the future, between minister and congregation. It is important that members and friends of the (name) Church understand and accept the terms of this covenant so that relationships with new ministerial staff may develop positively. This covenant is mutually affirmed by the Rev. (name) and the elders of (name) Church.

As of (date), the Rev. (name) relinquishes all pastoral and professional duties as the pastor of our congregation and will no longer function as part of the staff of (name) Church. Rev. (name) remains a friend, and personal relationships may continue. The Rev. (name) will not offer to provide pastoral services and will not accept any new pastoral obligations without the prior approval of the church leadership. *[If there are future obligations that will be fulfilled, such as weddings or funeral commitments, these are noted in the next sentence. Otherwise that sentence is omitted.]* The elders permit Rev. (name) to

complete the following obligations in this congregation: (itemize list with names and/or dates)

The congregation of (name) Church recognizes and accepts the completion of the Rev. (name)'s ministry here. To assist the congregation and its future leadership in developing effective relationships, the members of (name) Church will not request pastoral services, including baptisms, weddings, funerals, and worship leadership from the Rev. (name). Exceptions to this covenant may be granted only by the church's leadership.

The Rev. (name) recognizes and accepts the completion of *his/her* ministry with our congregation. Because *he/she* desires to support the future ministerial and congregational leadership of the (name) Church, Rev. (name) will not provide any further pastoral service unless the elders request it. Rev. (name) will not engage in conversations which offer opinions, advice, or criticism about the church's life and work, or the performance of interim and subsequently installed minister(s).

[Signed]

Minister (date)

Vice-president (date)

Representative of classis (date)

*Grounds:*

1. A written, formal agreement between the former pastor and the elders will make all parties aware of their responsibilities in the future relationship of the pastor and the congregation.
2. A written, formal agreement automatically brings questions about the relationship between a former pastor and the congregation to the elders—the officebearers responsible for the spiritual health of the congregation.

C. Instruct the Office of Pastor-Church Relations to

- monitor the effects of this guideline and covenant and, if necessary, suggest any adjustments to synod.
- compile any written materials it deems necessary so that pastors and churches have ready access to this material and the rationale for it.

*Grounds:*

1. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations is the denominational agency responsible for promoting healthy relationships between pastors and congregations.
2. Written materials on these policies will be more readily accessible than a decision published in the *Acts of Synod*.

Classis Grand Rapids East

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

## Overture 5: Revise the Guidelines for the Advisory Panel Process

### I. Introduction

This overture is written with great appreciation for all the efforts to make Christian Reformed Churches safe churches. The importance of our ultimate



goals of effective prevention of abuse and providing justice and healing in an adequate response to abuse cannot be stressed enough. In support of those efforts and in pursuit of these goals, we offer the following recommendation.

## II. Background

Synod 2005 revised the procedures and guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader,<sup>1</sup> dealing among others with the so-called Advisory Panel Process. Those synodical guidelines include the right for all parties to be assisted during this process, by a so-called support person or advocate in the case of the accuser, and by a support person in the case of the accused. The synodical guidelines explicitly limit this right by excluding such support or advocacy by current or former practicing attorneys.<sup>2</sup> Or to be more specific, our guidelines exclude the possibility of legal counsel in the sessions of the Advisory Panel in the highly significant fact-finding stage of the aforementioned process.

The right to legal counsel (at all significant stages of criminal proceedings) is one of the principles of fundamental justice—a basic democratic right. It is safeguarded by international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>3</sup> and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (a.k.a. European Convention on Human Rights)<sup>4</sup> and defended by organizations such as Amnesty International.<sup>5</sup> In Canada this right is guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in the United States by the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution.

Though the right to legal counsel is not so general that it would apply to all possible situations where matters of rights and obligations are before

<sup>1</sup> See *Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 54-60; *Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 775-77, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 2001 Revision, pp. 490-501.

<sup>2</sup> *Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 59; *Acts of Synod 2005*, Article 73 (adopted), Recommendation 3 refers to these guidelines without quoting them in full in the *Acts of Synod* itself.

<sup>3</sup> Article 14, point 3; In the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum guarantees, in full equality: (d) To be tried in his presence, and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing; to be informed, if he does not have legal assistance, of this right; and to have legal assistance assigned to him, in any case where the interests of justice so require, and without payment by him in any such case if he does not have sufficient means to pay for it. (Accession by Canada on 19 May 1976. Signed by the United States of America 5 Oct 1977, ratified 8 Jun 1992.)

<sup>4</sup> Article 6 – (Right to a fair trial) 3 Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the following minimum rights: c to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/fairtrial/fairtria.htm> for the Amnesty International Fair Trials Manual.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Heuvel, P. van den, “Hervormde Kerkorde, Een praktische Toelichting, Tweede herziene druk,” Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, pp. 223-25, 319-25, 441-42. Heuvel, P. Van den, “Toelichting op de kerkorde van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland,” Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, pp. 235-57. “Kerkorde en ordinaties van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland inclusief de overgangsbepalingen,” Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, pp. 128, 159, 161. While in the process of developing their own rules and regulations, the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, with whom we are in ecclesiastical fellowship have used the church order and guidelines of the “Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijemaakt” which have secured the right to legal counsel in article 11 of their regulations regarding “indiening van een appelschrift.”



a court or tribunal, it is important to point out that it is a right in criminal proceedings. It is even an obligation in a majority of civil court proceedings in a number of Western democracies, and it has been incorporated as a right (for those involved in procedures similar to the Advisory Panel Process<sup>6</sup>) in a number of church orders and/or synodical guidelines of Reformed denominations related to the CRC.

It is worth noting that these Reformed denominations have not only safeguarded a fair trial or procedure by granting the right to legal counsel; they have also dropped the requirement that such counsel should be provided by a person from within the same denomination.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, they have safeguarded the competency of their “panel” by ruling that at least two panel members should be legal experts<sup>8</sup> (and in some guidelines an additional minimum of two theologians is required).

The denial of the right to legal counsel in our synodical guidelines and procedures has raised concerns about the fairness of the Advisory Panel Process. Further inquiries addressed to both our classical safe church coordinator and our denominational office have not removed our concerns.

The denominational office has indicated that this rule exists to protect the ecclesiastical nature of the process. We agree that the ecclesiastical sphere can be distinguished from the sphere of state or federal law. But at the same time there is a judicial or legal aspect to an ecclesiastical process which is created to seek justice. Legal expertise may turn out to be crucial to the success of this process. Furthermore, the synodical guidelines do acknowledge under the heading “five important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines”<sup>9</sup> that the Advisory Panel Process may have legal consequences for the parties involved by assuming legal obligations not dictated under the laws of their jurisdiction. Legal liability may be at stake as well. Because of that the guidelines do recommend legal counsel and legal protection for the advisory panel and its members on the one hand, while denying that right in some significant stages to the other parties involved in the Advisory Panel Process on the other hand.<sup>10</sup>

The denominational office assumes that, with the introduction of legal counsel, the sessions will become more adversarial. This in itself is debatable, but even if it were the case, seeking justice and protecting fundamental rights of all participants in the process should have priority over our desire not to make the process adversarial.

The denominational office has expressed a concern that the panel members and support persons or advocates currently involved will be deprived

<sup>7</sup> A limitation of rights that is part of the CRC guidelines. See *Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Competency, independence, and impartiality of the tribunal are another fundamental right safeguarded by aforementioned International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights article 14.1 (“All persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, or of his rights and obligations in a suit at law, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law”). Competency in the Advisory Panel Process is only safeguarded in the sense of expertise in the dynamics of abuse, but not necessarily in other areas.

<sup>9</sup> *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 2001 Revision, p. 500.

<sup>10</sup> *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 2001 Revision, p. 501.

of their ability to use their gifts, talents, and skills. This is an insufficient reason for excluding other highly skilled, professionally trained, often very experienced, and, probably, at least equally gifted and talented people from the process.

The right to legal counsel (for all parties involved in the process), as well as a requirement to have at least one or two legal experts on the Advisory Panel would not exclude people with other relevant gifts, talents, skills, training, or experience from serving.

### **III. Overture**

Classis B.C. North-West overtures synod to revise the guidelines for the Advisory Panel Process so that

- A. The synodical rules and guidelines will include the right to legal counsel for all parties involved and at all stages of the process.
- B. The synodical rules and guidelines will allow such legal counsel to be provided by any person no matter his or her affiliation to the Christian Reformed Church.
- C. The synodical rules and guidelines will protect the competency of the Advisory Panel by requiring at least one legal expert to be a member of the panel, preferably but not necessarily a confessing member of the Christian Reformed Church.

#### *Grounds:*

- 1. It is important to protect procedural justice and the fundamental right to legal counsel at all significant stages of the process for such procedural justice.
- 2. It is important to seek both justice and healing through the Advisory Panel procedure and recognize the valuable contribution legal expertise makes toward that goal.
- 3. It is important to note the possible legal consequences and legal liability of all that takes place within the Advisory Panel Process.
- 4. We need to note the graveness of the issues dealt with in the Advisory Panel Process and the potential major consequences for employment, finances, reputation, social life, and spiritual life of the persons involved.
- 5. It is important to provide legal protection and justice in relation to the aforementioned four points both for the accuser and the accused, both for the innocent and the guilty, both against abuse and slander.
- 6. It is important to recognize that justice and healing are complementary and not mutually exclusive.

Classis B.C. North-West  
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

### **Overture 6: Include the Heidelberg Catechism in the New Hymnal**

Classis Wisconsin overtures Synod 2008 to include the Heidelberg Catechism in the new hymnal.

*Grounds:*

1. The Heidelberg Catechism is one of the three Forms of Unity that provides theological definition to the Christian Reformed denomination.
2. The Heidelberg Catechism is used as a teaching and liturgical tool in many Christian Reformed churches.
3. The *Psalter Hymnal* continues to play an important, unifying role in the Christian Reformed Church, and therefore the next edition should include the Heidelberg Catechism.
4. As the official publishing medium of the Christian Reformed Church, Faith Alive Christian Resources needs to place the long-term health of the denomination over its efforts to market a hymnal to the Reformed Church in America.

Classis Wisconsin  
John Bylsma, stated clerk

## **Overture 7: Include the Reformed Confessions in the New Hymnal**

### **I. Background**

Synod 2007 approved plans for a new hymnal, designed for use by both the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, including creeds and liturgies that the RCA and CRC have in common. It has been reported that the Heidelberg Catechism will not be included because the two denominations use different versions (cf. *The Banner*, July 2007).

### **II. Overture**

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2008 to instruct the 2013 hymnal committee to publish an edition of the new hymnal being planned in 2013 in conjunction with the Reformed Church in America that includes the three ecumenical creeds and the three Reformed Confessions (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort). Synod should reject the proposal not to include the Heidelberg Catechism in the new hymnal.

*Grounds:*

1. Since the Christian Reformed Church is a confessional denomination that subscribes to the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed) and to the three Reformed confessions (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort), these statements ought to be part of its worship book.
2. Church Order Article 54-b states that "At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. . . ." Excluding the Heidelberg Catechism and the other Reformed confessions from the new hymnal would prove to be a handicap for the promotion and exposition of these confessional statements.
3. The significance of the Heidelberg Catechism in the life and worship of the CRCNA requires that the hymnal committee alone should not

make the decision as to inclusion of the catechism in the newly proposed hymnal; the synod itself should make this decision.

4. There are no overwhelming obstacles to publishing an edition that includes the three ecumenical creeds and the three Reformed confessions.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

## **Overture 8: Instruct the New Hymnal Committee Regarding Placement of the Psalms**

### **I. Background**

Synod 2007 approved plans for a new hymnal designed for use by both the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America. While the hymnal will continue to include the 150 Psalms, it has been reported that they will not be placed within the hymnal in numerical order but rather by subject matter (cf. *The Banner*, July 2007).

### **II. Overture**

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2008 to continue to prioritize the Psalms in the proposed 2013 hymnal by instructing the hymnal committee to place them at the beginning of the hymnal in numerical order rather than merely including them in a topical manner throughout the hymnal.

*Grounds:*

1. Psalm singing has been an important part of personal and communal worship for millennia in the holy Catholic church, in particular for the Reformed tradition. Assigning the Psalms to a secondary placement in a hymnal de-emphasizes their historic importance.
2. The simple, logical connection between the Psalms and their placement in Scripture is broken by not placing the Psalms in their numerical order at the beginning of the hymnal. There is no reason to reject this mnemonic aid.
3. The development of a new hymnal should capitalize on the renewed interest in the Christian community in the use of the Psalter in worship. "After years of decline in psalmody, even in communions that once sang only the psalms, a remarkable resurgence of psalm singing began in the second half of the twentieth century" (*Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, p. 51).

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

## **Overture 9: Establish an Environmental Policy Task Force**

### **I. Hopeful background**

Long before *ecology* and *environmental protection* became buzzwords, the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship researched and produced *Earthkeeping: Stewardship of Creation* (Loren Wilkinson, Peter DeVos, Calvin DeWitt

*et al.*, Eerdmans, 1980), a pioneer in the field of Christian environmental studies. Linking the gifts of students of science, philosophy, and Scripture, this volume has proved in the twenty-seven years since publication (and 1991 revision as *Earthkeeping in the 90s*) to be a fertile seedbed for an ever-growing number of projects, articles, books, conferences, academic institutes, and teams of environmentally conscious scholars and activists to understand and work in energy conservation and reduced air, ground, and water pollution. *Earthkeeping* and its successors produced much helpful information and suggested many practices for sustainable development and responsible living. Long-time member of the CRCNA and of that team of scholars, Dr. Calvin DeWitt, has developed an international reputation as a scholar, activist, and individual example of living modestly and reducing environmental impact personally and in institutions (such as Mancelona, Michigan's Au Sable Institute) he has led or worked in.

For its part, the CRCNA has made significant intellectual, theological, and spiritual contributions to environmentally responsible living. Synods in the early 1990s commissioned production by CRC Publications (now Faith Alive Christian Resources) of study guides on environmental stewardship and its ethical framework in response to various overtures. CRC Publications reported in 1994 and 1995 on its recycling efforts and policy. Calvin College has also established the Bunker Interpretive Center on its campus, protects a large natural area surrounding that center, and includes an environmental studies program in its curriculum. Several of the college's scientific departments (engineering, biology, chemistry, and more) continue to graduate academics and professionals with deep commitments to respectful treatment of God's earth, all honoring the claim of Psalm 24:1 and other passages that "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it." The CRCNA's influence in this field has extended to other lands and churches, as the synod of the international Reformed Ecumenical Council produced its own study, *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation* in 1997.

## II. The sobering present—nearby and far

Yet if we combine all that and the many unmentioned projects with the work of other organizations outside CRC and Christian circles for many years, it seems that those efforts have been futile. Much of humanity is still indifferent to societal excess, consumerism, and environmental thoughtlessness. More sobering, in numerous smaller and larger ways, North Americans in the CRCNA contribute to those excesses, as exemplified below. The saddest result of such consumerism that is in our bones is that it makes us foolishly and wrongly feel more in control of our needs, wants, desires, lives, and destinies—all the while unwittingly thinking we are less dependent on God.

Whether one believes human-made global warming is changing the world's environment or if the earth is merely following natural cycles, several worrisome facts are clear and incontrovertible. Figures from 2006 show that demand for oil is at an all-time high, fuelled by the continued economic expansion of the economies of China and India. China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest consumer of oil in 2003 and is closing in on the United States, with demand for oil growing at about 15 percent each year. Western Europe and Japan are heavily dependent on oil imports because production cannot meet massive domestic demand. The gas-guzzling United

States is the world's largest per-capita oil consumer but produces much of its requirements itself. Producers in the Middle East, where oil costs so little, are also heavy users. Poorer countries consume much less per head (BBC News, January 2, 2008).

Yet North Americans still produce a substantial amount of pollution and contamination. A study of the world's power stations has shown the extent to which developed countries produce more carbon dioxide per person than emerging economies. Australians were found to be the world's worst polluters per capita, producing five times as much CO<sub>2</sub> from generating power as China. The United States came in second, with eight tons of the greenhouse gas per person, sixteen times more than that produced by India. The United States also produced the most CO<sub>2</sub> in total, followed by China. The Carbon Monitoring for Action (Carma) website is the first global inventory of emissions and looks at 50,000 power stations. Its data was compiled by the Center for Global Development, a U.S. think-tank (BBC News, November 14, 2007).

A more recent study shows that China has now overtaken the United States as the world's biggest producer of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas. This surprising announcement will increase anxiety about China's growing role in driving man-made global warming and will pile pressure onto world politicians to reach a new global agreement on climate change that includes the booming Chinese economy. China's emissions had not been expected to overtake those from the United States, formerly the world's biggest polluter, for several years, although some reports predicted that it could happen as early as next year (reported June 19, 2007, by John Vidal and David Adam, [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk)).

Environmental pollution is increasing in most places in the world. Cities are smog-bound, the contamination stretching, for example, on bad summer days from Chicago, Illinois; across northern Indiana; southern Michigan; farther east to Sarnia, Toronto, and Belleville, Ontario; north to Sudbury; and Algonquin Provincial Park. Chemical toxins contaminate Arctic waters and creatures far from human habitation.

Animal species from birds to fish, from tigers to elephants, from apes to insects are disappearing at alarming rates in tropical, temperate, alpine, and arctic zones. Over 8,300 plant species and 7,200 animal species around the globe are threatened with extinction, and many thousands more become extinct each year before biologists can identify them. The primary causes of species extinction or endangerment are habitat destruction, commercial exploitation (such as plant collecting, hunting, and trade in animal parts), damage caused by nonnative plants and animals introduced into an area, and pollution. Of these causes, direct habitat destruction threatens the greatest number of species. Species have slowly evolved and disappeared throughout geologic time as the result of climate changes and the inability to adapt to survive competition and predation. Since the 1600s, however, the rate of extinction has accelerated rapidly because of human population growth and human resource consumption. Today, most of the world's habitats are changing faster than most species can adapt to such changes through microevolution, or natural selection. The current global extinction rate is exponentially greater than the background extinction rate. Many biologists believe that we are in the middle of the greatest mass extinction episode since the disappearance of the dinosaurs (MSN *Encarta Encyclopedia*, "Endangered Species").

All that is only a prelude to the recital of disasters stretching the resources of God's good earth to sustain biological life. It is no exaggeration to claim that the planet and its inhabitants are under threat from human habitation and activity. Whatever else is happening, this much is sure: We as a human species, made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) are not as a whole reflecting that image responsibly as far as earthkeeping goes. Nor are we "serving" (Hebrew: *'abad*) and "keeping" (*caring for, guarding*; Hebrew: *shamar*; same root for *keeping commandments*) as God charged the first humans (Gen. 2:15). North Americans have led the world in developing technology, but one unintended result is excessive, ultimately unsustainable and sinful consumerism that is tragically imitated all over the world. North American Christians—Christian Reformed people in particular—would do well to add to our pioneering studies and many local conservation and recycling programs by taking more concerted, integrated action.

Meanwhile even our best Christian efforts at producing more articles, magazines, and books use more trees and other resources—ironically, even this overture. Our travel to and from conferences, synods, classes, and mission fields leave carbon footprints that cannot be bought back by "carbon offsets" or monetary contributions to environmentally friendly energy development projects. Ironically, even our scientific and eco-tourism trips to ecologically sensitive places the world over may be contributing as much harm to those places as the good intended to preserve them; the more well-known they become, the more people want to go see them before they're compromised or ruined by tourism or resource extraction.

### III. The sobering present—very close to home

In addition, if we as Christian Reformed people look at our own individual, congregational, and denominational practices, it is worth asking if—despite all our studies, knowledge, projects, programs, and good intentions—our actions match our professed convictions. While, for example, Faith Alive Christian Resources continues to recycle responsibly, while Calvin College's buildings are designed and built with state-of-the-art environmental technology, while individual congregations are constructing buildings with lower environmental impact (notably Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, Ontario), while many individuals and families recycle, CRC institutions, agencies, and individuals continue to use more and more resources with little intention to lower the environmental impact of their activities.

People in the CRC are not exempt from contributing to the overall emissions of greenhouse gases. Many families have more than two cars in the driveway, sometimes even one car per driver, or more. Vacations are spent at rented or owned cottages that gobble up fragile shorelines. We add to water pollution by racing around in boats and seadoos in the summer and snowmobiles in the winter. Our passports gather stamps from ever more distant exotic places where we go for our vacations.

Without picking on any particular CRC agency or institution, a brief glance at a typical day at synod, at conferences on our campuses, and in worship services or office practices in our churches shows an ever-growing mountain of resources used to promote our various brands. The result is that CRC institutions don't really live much more modestly than the society whose morally deadened atmosphere soaks deeply into us. For example,



many institutions and churches purchase pens (as the staff at Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ontario, did last Christmas, shortly before this overture originated there) as souvenirs for members or delegates. We receive lunch bags (reusable, but plastic, made from oil) with logos at conferences. We are sent presidential reports of 126 pages containing helpful, useful information about programs, but bulked up with 93 pages of donor names. We can buy sweatshirts, ties, t-shirts, and windbreakers with logos of agencies, institutions, and projects. We eat in cafeterias with vast choices of menu items from the cholesterol-laden to the flavor *du jour* of yogurt.

What happens to most of the non-edible stuff we get? We collect it, hang it on walls for a few weeks or years, toss it in closets, eventually throw it in the garbage, or unload it to thrift stores. Oddly, that often gives us more room for more stuff we get at church events—not to mention the merchandise we buy or receive thoughtlessly in non-Christian places. Most of this and more activity sampled from typical well-run CRC events really look no different from the consumer world. It might show appreciation for participation, help recruit students or volunteers, produce stunning events and conferences—but how much of it considers the Lord's creation? How much of it even remembers people in our own and other lands who struggle for daily bread while our obese culture takes up more space and gobbles more and more resources? Are we building bigger barns for our stuff and egos, for our marketing schemes, for evermore excessive lifestyles?

#### **IV. Potential responsible action**

Reviewing this agonizing and discouraging background, it would be easy to dismiss this complex issue as beyond help from the CRC, even though we take part in the problem. It would be tempting to label the foregoing as anger, hostility, or cynicism about modern Western life that has given the world and humanity many undeniable benefits such as vaccines, affordable and abundant food supplies, and international transportation networks. Nevertheless, we might wince at any number of the foregoing examples because they hit close to home. The intent is not accusatory; we all share responsibility. Rather, the hope and prayer is to lift up common, uncritical practices we all take part in without counting consequences, without weighing them against the privilege God gives us to keep his earth—to live modestly, carefully, humbly.

#### **V. Overture**

Furthermore and finally, the goal of this resume of thoughtless consumption is simple: Classis Niagara overtures Synod 2008 to instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to develop guidelines for CRC institutions, agencies, congregations, and affiliated organizations to implement practices, programs, and habits that respect God's earth by changing attitudes and consumption of excess in all areas of daily living in order to honor God and respect creation.

##### *Grounds:*

1. The topic of careful use of resources as a denomination has not been discussed at a synodical level since the 1990 report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment and the resulting CRC



Publications board reports in 1994 and 1995. As stewards of God's creation, it would be beneficial for the denomination to have a conversation on this topic again.

2. CRC institutions and members don't really live much more modestly than the broader society, yet as the redeemed imagebearers of the Creator, we are called to keep and guard God's creation as stewards awaiting the return of our King.

*Note:* This overture does not request establishment of yet another study committee. We really know enough of what is happening. We know what God wants for his earth and people in this issue, for we have diligently studied and prayed.

What is needed is a continuing and linked series of concrete guidelines, steps, and suggestions on how to live more simply, with less damage and impact that can be implemented by individuals, congregations, and agencies. A beginning list of such activities might include the following as well as more extensive suggestions:

- Discontinue entirely the use of paper plates, polystyrene, and plastic utensils, and using only reusable mugs, plates, and flatware.
- Use long-lasting, low-energy consuming compact fluorescent lightbulbs that are Energy Star® rated to replace incandescent bulbs.
- Provide denomination-wide guidelines for denominational and congregational properties to build, maintain, or refurbish with environmental sensitivity.
- Walk, carpool, use public transportation whenever possible.
- And more and more—all with the aim of reducing, recycling, and reusing—in all areas of personal, congregational, and denominational responsibility.

We recognize that synod cannot impose or enforce compliance with any policy. But we pray that God will move in our individual lives and hearts and our institutions to convict us how to live in ways that respect and love God, our neighbors, and ourselves in the earthly home God has given us. God graciously sustains us despite human abuse. May we prepare for Christ's return by helping to clean up the beautiful home God has given us.

Classis Niagara  
John TeBrake, stated clerk

#### **Overture 10: Commemorate the 500th Anniversary of John Calvin's Birth**

The council of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario, overtures synod to take the following actions in regards to the upcoming observations of John Calvin's 500th anniversary:

- A. That the synod of the Christian Reformed Church invite the church, including its classes, congregations, agencies, and affiliated groups, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth in 2009.

B. Further, that an appropriate Sunday in the year 2009 be set aside for congregations to commemorate John Calvin's life and work (e.g., Sunday, July 12 falls nearest to John Calvin's birthday).

C. That the Christian Reformed Church in North America join with other churches inspired by the legacy of John Calvin to reflect on the Reformer's role, the historical context of his life's work, and its relevance for our time by participating in events currently being organized to commemorate the anniversary, such as,

- John Calvin: Myth and Reality; April 16-18, 2009; Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Instituting Calvin: Society, Culture & Diaspora; June 18-21, 2009; University of Toronto in Toronto, Ontario. The Institute for Christian Studies is one of the organizing bodies.
- Calvin Quincentenary, July 7-9 and July 9-11, 2009; Institute for the History of the Reformation in Geneva, Switzerland.

*Grounds:*

1. John Calvin was a leading inspirational and organizational figure behind our denomination's 150 years of history, as well as that of other churches of the Reformation throughout the world.
2. This is a significant opportunity to build on the recent 150th anniversary of our own denomination and further reflect on our church's identity and history, as well as the legacy of Calvinism around the world.
3. The Christian Reformed Church in North America continues to enjoy close relations with members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council, to participate in the legacy of the Reformed tradition and John Calvin, and to apply those insights in the contemporary world of the church—intercultural ministry, covenanting for justice, worship, and praise.
4. Since other denominations will mark this event, this is a signal opportunity to join with others to remember our history and grow together.

Council of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario  
Margaret Nott, clerk

*Note:* This overture was presented to Classis Toronto but not adopted.

## **Overture 11: Appoint a Committee to Study Both Sides of the Women-in-Office Issue**

### **I. Background**

Synod 1995 declared "that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scripture 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); and on the basis of that observation, Synod 1995 allowed positions both in favor of women in office and in favor of reserving the offices for men to co-exist as disputable matters, a position which has stayed in effect until now. A ground for this decision was

that “numerous overtures [and] reports of previous synods adduce good biblical grounds for both positions.”

Since Synod 1995 based its decision on past reports and overtures for both positions, it is only fitting to examine one report on each side of the issue to see if they demonstrate sound biblical, Reformed principles of interpretation. For that purpose, this overture examines the 1973 and 1984 reports, which examined the same Bible passages and arrived at opposite conclusions. At no time in the 35-year history of the controversy about women in office has synod examined the Bible-interpretation methods of both approaches to the issue.

## II. Analysis

It is my contention that reports can honor the Scripture as the infallible Word of God, while at the same time interpreting it with unbiblical assumptions and inappropriate methods of Bible interpretation. My contention is that the Bible teaches that men and women are equal in status before God but have been given different roles in relation to each other in marriage and the church where men are to be the servant-leaders—“where the buck stops.” A presentation follows of quotations from the 1973 (first) and the 1984 (second) reports with my comments:

## III. Report to Synod 1973

A church dominated by either sex will be hampered in its being the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking for a moment at ‘the beginning,’ as Jesus himself does in Matthew 19:4,8, one could conclude that the church is shortchanging herself in her exclusion of women from office, especially so at a time when women are no less qualified for leadership than men, and have obtained positions of leadership in almost every other sector of life.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 520)

This report’s assumption is that reserving the offices for men means *male domination*. Its reference to a passage about divorce that has nothing to do with male-female relationships in the church offices, and its assumption that because women are qualified for the offices, they should be admitted to them, are all irrelevant ideas that reveal assumptions foreign to the Bible, not based on the Bible’s own assumptions.

In retrospect to Genesis 1 and 2 we note that we have discovered the basic equality between man and woman, which is expressed in different symmetrical roles. . . . In Reformed churches until the present, the difference in the roles of man and woman has led to the exclusion of the woman from office. The problem that presents itself here . . . is whether this practice does justice to the equality between the sexes as created by God and to the partnership between man and woman as intended by God. . . . Woman was created last and fell into sin first. . . . The fact that woman fell first, however, does not imply moral inferiority.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 522)

This report sets up the “straw-person” of male-superiority-female-inferiority and then refutes it by using passages from the Bible, concluding that women should be admitted to office. The problem is that this “straw-person” is not in the Bible; having authority does not mean superiority over others. The Bible requires different roles for male and female while at the same time affirming their equality in status before God. The report also inappropriately uses the method of what we might call “generality,” that is, making a general

statement about a passage that does not support its preconceived ideas without dealing with the specific details of, in this case, Genesis 2 (see an appropriate approach in the 1984 report [below]).

[In the N.T.] the status of women and their function in society had not improved since the days of the O.T. Therefore, the prominence given to women throughout the Gospels, especially in the Gospel of Luke, is remarkable. It is true that the Lord Jesus did not appoint women to be apostles. Yet women were always present, as Luke states (Lk. 8:1-4). . . . It is in accordance with the redemptive character of Jesus' ministry that he did not act as a revolutionary. . . .

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, pp. 542-44)

This interpretation reads into the text meaning that is not there. On the contrary, Jesus did show himself to be a revolutionary by deliberately breaking the Pharisees' Sabbath rules, thus partly leading to his crucifixion for our salvation. The Bible never even hints that Jesus' choice of men as apostles is a result of his avoidance of being a revolutionary; in fact, Jesus says that men in those twelve positions will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the "renewal of all things" (Matt. 19:28). In addition, the fact that women supported Jesus with their means (Lk. 8:4) has nothing to do with whether women should be admitted to the offices of the church.

With respect to the husband-wife relationship, Paul confesses on the one hand their complete oneness in Christ (Gal. 3:28) . . . and their duty to "be subject to one another" (Eph. 5:21). On the other hand, instead of accepting the social and practical consequences of the basic equality of man and wife, Paul tells them to be content with their present position of social inferiority and to submit to their husbands in everything (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Cor. 11:7-10; 1 Tim. 2:12-14). We may undoubtedly assume that Paul's "status-quo-ism" is for the furtherance of the gospel. Christianity must not be charged with bringing disorder. Undoubtedly, Paul had to take into account the social conditions prevailing in his days.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 550)

This report does a lot of "undoubted" assuming about Paul's purposes for writing and his supposed accommodation to the culture, while assuming that submissiveness also means *social inferiority*, even though Christ will "be made subject" to his Father at the last time (1 Cor. 15:28), while certainly not being socially inferior to the Father.

Agreeing with the explanation of W. Schmithals about 1 Corinthians 11:3-12, who says, "In vss. 3-9 the apostle is not arguing with full freedom, but is pressured in a certain direction by the view of the adversaries. . . . Over against this [view for equality], Paul takes his stand on the inequality of the sexes," the report states, "Our conclusion at this point is quite similar to the previous one regarding the headship of man. The creation order as Paul explains it in verses 7-10 stresses strongly how men and women must behave . . . with respect to their sexual differences, also in public life; it does not divide the area of public life into two segregated mutually isolated areas. Paul does not want to lead the Christian church back to the customs of the Jewish synagogue.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, pp. 560-61)

Here is the inappropriate "straw-person" method, in which the report imagines that Paul was "pulling his punches" because of pressure from his opponents; presents an extreme situation where males and females are "segregated," a word with emotional appeal; and imagines that Paul has the Jewish synagogue in mind, with no justification for any of these conclusions in the (con)text.

In Ephesians 5 an attitude of mutual submissiveness is seen as an evidence of 'being filled with the Spirit' (vs.18). . . . In this new relationship in which Christ has placed us, sex is something totally irrelevant. . . . The man has no "natural" superiority over the woman. . . . Then, in Ephesians 5:22-23, Paul tells the wives in the congregation to be submissive to their husbands. . . . We should not unduly stress the point that Paul calls the wives to be submissive, and the husbands to love. There certainly is no ground for concluding from these texts that women are inferior to men. Far from it, submissiveness is an act of yielding to the other person, voluntarily, out of love, for the sake of what is recognized as God's order. . . . It is clear that this submissiveness does not prohibit women from taking a leading role in the congregational meeting and affairs. However, there are restrictions, at least for married women.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, pp. 551, 552)

This report is fighting an unbiblical assumption (male superiority/dominance) that no one in favor of reserving the offices for males advocates. The report assumes that women's exclusion from church offices is because they are thought to be inferior to "superior" men, refutes that unbiblical idea, and concludes that the Bible allows women in those offices—certainly not biblical reasoning based on the Bible's own assumptions.

A problem, however, has arisen. The new wine of Christian liberty resulted in revolution rather than in new holiness. The problem is stated in [1 Cor. 11,] verses 4-6. Some women were praying and prophesying with unveiled head. . . . It is evident that this wife's honoring her husband by wearing a veil holds true only as long as the veil has a certain cultural function in the society. In our present society a veil, or the lack of it, has nothing to do with respect for one's husband. . . . The point is that, despite the fact that women do participate, Paul opposes revolutionary feminism [referring to 1 Cor. 11:5]. . . . Hence the conclusion from [Paul's point that man is the head of the woman—verse 3], that of the headship, can be only that the difference in position between husband and wife must be honored at all times. The text does not indicate that women are to be excluded from ecclesiastical office or from active participation in public worship, but rather . . . [she] must observe certain rules of decorum.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 557)

Here is a clear case of what can be called "tunnel vision," an inappropriate method of interpretation. That is, the principle of the headship (servant-leadership) of men is clearly stated in verse 3, grounded in the creation order in verses 7-9, and applied by Paul to the male-female roles in the church. The report assumes that any difference in male/female roles means male domination and that Paul's prohibitions are only for his culture, thus disregarding a principle that Paul clearly states in verse 3 just because women no longer wear veils. Such an approach of "tunnel vision" that disregards biblical evidence and principles that are against a prior idea rather than letting the Bible lead them to the truth on the Bible's own assumptions and according to its own principles, which is a more appropriate Reformed approach.

"This [1 Tim. 2:11-14] is the fourth and final passage. . . . It also seems to be the most difficult one" (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 564). This comment is a revealing insight into the obvious fact that the committee had a previous assumption that women must be admitted to the offices and that led them to a "tunnel vision" approach by saying, in effect, that this passage is the most difficult obstacle in their path to providing support for their one-sided approach to the Bible. The committee continues,

Those who defend the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office find their strongest argument [in 1 Tim. 2], since the apostle does not merely

refer to the women's habit of taking part in the discussions during the worship services . . . but explicitly discusses teaching . . . by women. It is clear from verse 8 that in this passage the apostle gives guidelines for the public worship services.

(*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 565)

The proof that this passage is only about public worship is far from conclusive, though the NIV seems to interpret it that way. Rather, 1 Timothy 2:8, in referring to men's lifting up "holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing" does not need to be restricted to worship, since public worship is far from the only place where the people prayed. Instead, this chapter could also be read as a series of Paul's observations about Christian conduct in the church.

#### IV. Majority report on headship (*Agenda for Synod 1984*)

All that God says in Genesis 1 about imaging him, being fruitful, multiplying, subduing, having dominion, is said to both, to male and female. . . . Conjunction and parity come to the fore in the Genesis 1 revelation about male and female. . . . That is, chapter 1 says nothing significant about roles. . . . [However,] Genesis 2 provides the foundation for much N.T. teaching about the relationship between man and woman. . . . Chapter 2 tells us first of all about the creation of man, a male, Adam. And the first thing we want to note is that it is not the woman but Adam who is first, who is prior. . . . To the Hebrew mind, this whole matter of firstness—priority—was very significant. . . . The firstborn was accorded a preeminence with respect to the others who followed.

(*Agenda for Synod 1984*, p. 290)

This report uses the proper principle of interpretation that determines how the original hearers (readers) understood the inspired Word.

The status of firstborn retains its relevance in the N.T. It is significant that Christ is called "the first-born of all creation" (Col. 1:15). . . . Luke called Adam 'the son of God' (Lk. 3:38). With respect to the woman we may say that Adam was "firstborn". . . . God created woman to be Adam's fitting helper. . . . It is in the context of this declaration of Adam's total dependence on God, his accountability to God (do not eat), as well as his dominion over all creatures (he names them), that the creation of woman is narrated. (*Agenda for Synod 1984*, p. 291)

The use of the rest of Scripture in context is a proper principle of Bible interpretation.

When God presents Adam with his fitting help, Adam breaks out in jubilation, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman ['ishah], because she was taken out of man ['ish]." (Gen. 2:23) . . . The leadership role of man ['ish], the initiative for establishing a new family and home rests primarily with the fact that Adam called her "Woman" [and] that Adam was in a position of authority over her. . . . God's activity of calling [in Gen. 1] indicates his authority over that which he had made . . . Verse 24 draws the general conclusion that man and woman belong together. Nonetheless, it is Adam that who sings this song, and it is Adam who calls (names) her "Woman." . . . Scholars point out that at that time . . . the act of name-giving was the prerogative of someone in authority over the person or thing named.

(*Agenda for Synod 1984*, p. 292)

Again, this report rightly uses the understanding of the original audience and the rest of the Bible to interpret a passage. Having authority does not mean superiority, as we see in Genesis 1:26, 27.

We conclude that Genesis 2 teaches that Adam was first, predominant, preeminent with respect to the woman. His was the position of authority, of

leadership. Yet, the woman shares fully in Adam's life. . . . That in fact she did eat the forbidden fruit was no fault of either God or Adam. Genesis 3:3 says that she knew about the tree of which she was not to eat. Against better knowledge she submitted herself to the lies and deceit of the serpent. In so doing she rebelled not only against the command of God but also against the good (that is, obedient-to-God) leadership given her by Adam. In her disobedience she set both God and Adam aside and took the serpent as her leader, following and submitting to the serpent's destructive lead thereafter leading her husband into sin, [thus showing] what can happen when the proper roles of man and woman are reversed. . . . [Eve] became the teacher of man, with disastrous results.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, pp. 315, 316)*

Comparing Scripture with Scripture to interpret the Bible and using the details of a passage to understand the principle of a passage (here, Adam and Eve's different roles) are proper methods. In Genesis 3,

it is significant to note that after the fall had occurred, "The Lord God called to the man [Adam], and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Gen. 3:9). Though the woman had first eaten of the fruit of the tree, God called upon the man first to give an account of what had taken place. In the light of what we have seen about the priority, the authority, and the leadership of Adam in Genesis 2, it is not surprising that God calls on Adam first. God holds Adam first of all responsible for the weal and woe of humankind. His rank and position understandably place him in a representative role. This confirms our understanding of the way in which Genesis 2 describes the role of man and woman and their relation to each other.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, p. 294)*

This interpretation employs a responsible use of context.

It is the understanding and position of the committee . . . that what we learn about the relationship of Adam and woman in Genesis 2 has relevance beyond the bounds of marriage as well. Several considerations give us reasons for this. First, the words used in Genesis 2 for man are, namely, 'adam and 'ish. . . . Second, the woman is clearly given to man to be his fitting help in fulfilling God's mandate (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15). . . . Thus, it is difficult to see how a husband's priority, authority and leadership can be confined to marriage only. . . . The apostle Paul certainly did not so confine it. He affirmed that the husband's position with respect to the wife had relevance for life in the church as well.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, p. 293)*

The report responsibly uses all of the Bible for its interpretation of the Bible.

In this passage [1 Cor. 11] Paul is discussing how men and women should pray and prophesy in public church meetings. . . . Verse 3 deals with a triple headship: "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." . . . Some hold that head here means source or origin [not rulership]. . . . Is Christ the source of every man? . . . This is not the same as saying that Christ is the source out of which all men have grown. . . . Nor is it correct to say that all men are part of the organism of which Christ is the head in the sense of a "source" – for this relationship holds within the fellowship of believers, but it is not true of "every man." [Christ] proceeded and came from God in the sense that God (the Father) sent him into the world to redeem his people from their sins. But this is not the same as saying that God the Father was the source of Christ. The Father was Christ's sender, not his source. . . . If we think of head in the sense of "ruling head," however, the words just discussed make perfectly good and perfectly biblical sense. God is indeed the head of Christ in the sense of "ruling head," just as we think of Christ as the Mediator whom the Father sent into the world. Christ, in fact, says many times that he has come into this world only to do the Father's will. . . . Since the first and last headship mentioned in verse 3 are headships of rule, we conclude



that the headship spoken of in the middle part of the verse, 'and the head of the woman is man' is also a headship of rule, or a direction-setting headship. . . . In Ephesians 5:23 – the only other N.T. passage where man is explicitly called the head of the woman (there the wife)—the headship described [there] is also a direction-setting headship of man over woman [and] is grounded in creation. . . . The word created in [1 Cor. 11:9] specifically brings us back to the creation narrative found in Gen. 2. In our earlier study of Gen. 2 we found that the creation of man prior to woman implied a certain headship of the man. . . . What was implied in Gen. 2, however, is explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians. 11: "the head of the woman is man." . . . This headship is grounded in creation. For Paul this headship of the man over the woman was the basis for the exhortation given in verses 4 to 7 about the covering of the head. Paul recognized that in the new era of the covenant in which he was living, after the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost Day, women had indeed been given new privileges and gifts. That they were able to pray and prophesy in church meetings was evidence of this. Apparently, however, some of the Corinthian women extended their newfound liberty too far. They were praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered. This, Paul saw, was a denial of the proper role relationships in the church. Hence Paul told these women that they should cover their heads as a recognition of the fact that they were under the headship of the men.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, pp. 308, 309; emphasis added)*

Here, again, is an excellent approach of finding the principle in a passage by examining the context.

Lest Paul's words about proper role relationships in the church be misunderstood, however, he quickly added [1 Cor. 11,] verses 11 and 12, which show the equality and mutual interdependence of man and woman; "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman" (NIV). These words are meant to keep men from abusing their headship over women. They suggest that what was said earlier in the chapter about the headship of the men over the women as partners with them in the work of the kingdom. And yet these verses do not negate what was said earlier in the chapter about the headship of the man.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, p. 309)*

This approach avoids the inappropriate "tunnel-vision" interpretative approach that disregards Bible principle that disagrees with previous ideas and is a balanced approach that takes into consideration all of the Bible's teachings without discarding any of them.

This thought [of male leadership in 1 Timothy 2:12] is strengthened by the next phrase, 'or to have authority over a man.' It should be noted that 'teaching' and 'having authority' are closely linked together. What Paul here prohibits, in other words, is the kind of teaching which involves the exercise of authority over men. . . . But if Paul meant only to forbid women from exercising a domineering kind of authority, he certainly could have used a word [clearly meaning] "domineer"—for example, *katakyrieuontes* in 1 Peter 5:3: "not lording it over those entrusted to you." . . . The following reference to the prior creation of Adam would suggest that the prohibition of verse 12 is directed to women as such, rather than to certain women who happen to have been using authority in a tyrannical way. As we go on to consider verses 13 and 14, we note that . . . Paul grounds his prohibition in the facts of creation: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (v. 13). As we saw in our discussion of Genesis 2, Adam's having been created before Eve implies a kind of direction-setting headship of the man over the woman.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, p. 310)*

The Bible is rightly interpreted by comparing Scripture with Scripture on its own terms.



What we do learn here [1 Cor. 14:33b-35] is that certain kinds of speaking in the church service were prohibited to women at that time, since they were asked to "be in submission" to others—presumably, to the leaders of the church. One reason why women were prohibited from such speaking in that day . . . was probably that such speaking involved making judgments about the presentations of certain men (possibly including their own husbands); such judgment-making would amount to exercising authority over men in the church service. . . . It suggests that Paul is here repeating the thought developed in 1 Cor. 11:1-16: namely, that the headship of the man should be recognized in the worship services of the church. . . . Verse 11 reads as follows: "A woman should learn in quietness and full [lit., all] submission." . . . So the submission to which women are called might be to all men. Or it might be to those who are leaders in the church. Whichever interpretation we adopt, those to whom women are to be submissive would obviously be men. And so we could say that the principle of the headship of man over woman, which we have found to be taught or implied in other Scripture passages, is also implied here. . . . Timothy's special gift seems to have been that of teaching. . . . It would appear, therefore, that Paul is forbidding to women particularly the kind of teaching he has assigned to men like Timothy and Epaphras: the official teaching of the church . . . [which] is to be done, not by women, but only by qualified men.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, pp. 313-15)*

This interpretation is a balanced, biblical treatment of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 and clearly supports our point that the Bible describes males and females as equal in status before God with different roles in their mutual relationship.

Galatians 3:28 is often quoted as proof that in the N.T. the barrier between men and women based exclusively on sex difference has been removed, and that . . . no office in the church should now be closed to women. . . . The main issue at stake in Gal. 3 is the role of the law in relation to faith. A secondary theme is that both Jew and Gentile must come to God on the basis of faith. Gal. 3:28 must be read within this framework. Verse 22 states that all people have been consigned to sin, so that all persons . . . need to be saved by faith. Since this is so, all people come to God on equal footing, their race, freedom or lack of freedom, or sex having nothing to do with the way in which they are to be saved. . . . With respect to the obtaining of salvation by faith, therefore, there is no difference between male and female. . . . [That] fact . . . does not take away the role differences between men and women which have been established in creation.

*(Agenda for Synod 1984, p. 319)*

This is a very good example of taking the purposes for Paul's writing and the context to shed light on the text.

The case for women in office, at least in the 1973 report, is based on inappropriate approaches to Bible-interpretation, while the case for reserving the offices for men in the 1984 report on headship interprets the Bible responsibly. In addition, it is also my observation, after reading all of the reports and overtures over the past 35 years, that the two contrasting approaches are consistent throughout all of the reports and overtures upon which Synod 1995 based its decision to accept both approaches.

## V. Overture

A. Pastor Bruce Leiter overtures synod to declare that since the Bible-interpretation basis for the CRC's position for women in office employs inappropriate methods of interpretation and since the position for reserving the offices for men employs appropriate methods of interpretation, the Bible

reserves for men the offices of minister, elder, and ministry associate, “where the buck stops,” in the churches.

B. If synod wishes to examine both sides’ positions more thoroughly, Pastor Bruce Leiter overtures synod to appoint an objective committee to (1) provide a list of the appropriate methods of Bible interpretation, (2) analyze all of the overtures and reports since 1973, including the 1973 report and the 23-page communication to Synod 1992, and all of the relevant Bible passages in the light of the appropriate Bible-interpretation principles, (3) evaluate both positions in the light of appropriate Bible-interpretation methods, and (4) advise synod on a course of action based on the Bible’s own assumptions and teachings and the best interpretation.

*Grounds:*

1. An appropriate analysis of the relevant biblical passages on the basis of the Bible’s own assumptions (clearly shown by the 1984 report on headship) leads to the conclusion that the Bible teaches that the servant-leadership roles in marriage and in the church are reserved for men in situations “where the buck stops.”
2. The case for opening all offices to women is based on non-biblical assumptions and interpretation methods, not on the Bible’s own assumptions.
3. The decision of Synod 1995 that accepted the positions both for and against women in office is, therefore, unacceptable.
4. We call on synod, in the light of our analysis, to do the biblically right—not the politically right—thing and take a stand on the biblical principle of male servant-leadership by reserving the offices of minister, elder, and ministry associate for males.

Bruce Leiter

*Note:* This overture was presented to but not adopted by the council of Lakeview Community CRC, Valentine, Nebraska, on November 14, 2007. It was then presented to Classis Iakota in March 2008 but not adopted.

**Overture 12: Overturn the Decision of Synod 2006 That Empowers the Candidacy Committee to Control the Church Order Article 8 Process for Ministers Coming from Other Denominations**

**I. Overture**

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2008 to overturn the decision of Synod 2006 that empowers the Candidacy Committee to control the Church Order Article 8 process for ministers who are entering the CRC from other denominations.

*Grounds:*

1. The current “Journey of Affiliation” under the control of the Candidacy Committee lacks any relational element.
  - a. One potential candidate currently in the Article 8 process has made it clear that there are no individuals from the Candidacy Committee or the seminary who have a meaningful relationship with him. The

- contact with the candidate is almost exclusively by phone or email. (During one phone conversation the seminary staff did not know the process he needed to follow and gave him incorrect information about the EPMC program.)
- b. The relational element is left to the local church and classis while all the power is in the hands of the Candidacy Committee who have no relationship with the candidate.
  - c. Crossroads CRC is directly involved with two gifted pastors from other denominations who have found the current process to be rigid, uncaring, and confusing.
2. The classis is the logical and most effective provider of both educational and relational requirements needed for orientation and ordination.
    - a. The candidate in most cases is in the process of being called to the local classis.
    - b. The classis has the most at stake in the process of calling an effective leader. Therefore, the classis is highly motivated to select competent and effective leaders.
    - c. Since the candidate's leadership will most significantly affect the local church and classis, the classis should have the power and responsibility to make the decision.
    - d. The local mentor would meet monthly with the potential candidate to determine sound doctrine and spiritual maturity. The mentor would work with the Candidacy Committee regarding the candidate's progress and pitfalls. (The Candidacy Committee could be commissioned by synod to provide ideas for the local classis to formulate an effective orientation and ordination screening process.)
    - e. The potential candidate would be required to attend local classis meetings.
  3. The Candidacy Committee should serve an advisory role to the classis; *not* in an authoritative role.
    - a. The Candidacy Committee's short history has proven its inability to effectively ordain gifted individuals through Church Order Article 8. Those who might be considering entrance into the CRC or are being recruited for ministry in the CRC are reconsidering when they understand the process and expectations involved.
    - b. The question still remains following the decision of Synod 2006 to shut the door on so many pastors of ethnic and Reformed diversity: "Who and what are we afraid of that we need such a rigorous approval process?"
    - c. We have made the requirements so burdensome and unfriendly for the privilege of being "one of us."
  4. "The best predictor of future behavior is past success." The current "Journey of Affiliation" provides little or no opportunity to discover the candidate's past behavior.
    - a. The Candidacy Committee has outlined a process that could potentially ordain pastors who have no effective pastoral skills. They may test well but lack the gifts necessary to pastor effectively.

- b. The classis has the opportunity and the desire to make the “Journey of Affiliation” a “win-win” proposition. Under a newly empowered classis, there could be a two-year process for ordination while the candidate is employed by the calling church. The church and classis then have a better idea of the candidate’s giftedness for ministry as opposed to their ability to finish classes and jump through hoops. The candidate has two years of work experience and pay to show for his time instead of a rubber stamp or a letter of rejection.
- c. Paul Borden, in his book *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the Mission Field*, identifies that the best way to select effective church leaders is by observing proven leadership. The classis can provide the opportunity for the candidate to prove leadership in the field.

Classis Illiana

Robert L. Jipping, stated clerk

## **Overture 13: Revise Church Order Article 8-c to Remove the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy Requirement**

### **I. Introduction**

Church order Article 8-c states that ministers coming into the CRC from other denominations are “required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).” Classis Northcentral Iowa believes that the need addressed by this article can be met with greater flexibility by means of the structures synod has already put in place, that is the Candidacy Committee (formerly the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee) and the Classical Ministry Leadership Teams (CMLT).

### **II. Background**

#### *A. A short history of Church Order Article 8-c*

In the 2001 edition of the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, Church Order Article 8-c reads as follows: “Ministers of other denominations who have not been declared eligible for a call shall not be called unless all synodical requirements have been met.” During the following years synod expanded Article 8-c to include the stipulations that ministers from other denominations

shall be declared eligible for a call by a classis only after a thorough examination of their theological training, ministerial record, knowledge of and soundness in the Reformed faith, and exemplariness of life. The presence and concurring advice of the synodical deputies are required.

Synod 2006 adopted the following statements, which have given Article 8-c its current form.

That synod require participation in a modified EPMC program by all persons seeking candidacy in the CRC by means of Church Order Article 7 or 8. Exceptions to this requirement could only be granted by the SMCC.

*Grounds:*

- a. The SMCC wishes to affirm Synod 2004's desire that standards for ordination to the ministry of the Word be maintained. The Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) EPMC program clearly reflects those standards.
- b. The SMCC will work with CTS to adapt the EPMC program to be appropriate for a wide range of persons seeking ordination through Article 7 or 8.
- c. The denomination has a strong interest in every CRC minister of the Word having a minimum orientation to CRC church history, CRC polity, Reformed theology, and Reformed hermeneutics as taught at the seminary of the denomination.
- d. Article 7 and 8 candidates who demonstrate an inability to fulfill the EPMC residency requirements may, by way of exception, be granted the opportunity by the SMCC to complete the program through a number of alternative means, including, for example, on-line courses, mentor-supported learning contracts, regional educational strategies, and contextually shaped learning opportunities.

*(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 663)*

This was ratified by Synod 2007, which gave Church Order Article 8-c its present form:

Ministers of other denominations desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).

*B. Evaluation*

For a number of years synod has been in the process of studying the way candidates enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. A significant change came at Synod 2004, which received the report of the Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry and moved the Christian Reformed Church toward a process of guiding candidates to ordination under the supervision of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (now Candidacy Committee), supported by Classical Ministry Leadership Teams. We believe synod took a valuable step forward in the process by defining standards for ministry that can be used by the classis, synod, and Calvin Theological Seminary as it evaluates candidates' readiness for ministry.

In this overture we are specifically addressing the matter of ministers coming from other denominations. While the current Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy is a valuable tool for guiding ministers from other denominations into CRC ministry, we believe the Christian Reformed Church can better accomplish this goal with an expanded range of options.

Classis Northcentral Iowa has worked with seven men from other denominations who have desired to enter the ministry of the CRC. Most of these candidates have contributed a great deal to the life and vitality of the CRC and our congregations, though we have learned some hard lessons along the way as well.

Out of that experience we envision the classis taking the primary role of supervising the process of candidacy for a minister coming from another denomination. The classis would not, however, be allowed to choose its own path, but must work within the guidelines synod has established. The 2004 standards for ministry should provide the core of common practice among the various classes. The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee must serve synod by holding the classes accountable to these standards.

In a Reformed ecclesiastical structure we believe it is appropriate that the local congregation and its classis be given the leading responsibility for

supervising ministers coming from other denominations. The denomination then exercises its legitimate role in upholding standards that must be observed throughout the denomination.

We observe that synod itself has opened the door to consideration of a modification of the process for Article 8-c candidates. The *Acts of Synod 2007* contain the following adopted motion:

That synod instruct the SMCC to generate more feasible and flexible alternatives to the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy that take into account the diversity of Article 7 and 8 candidates and ministry settings in the CRC.

*(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 665)*

The current MEPMC program is a valuable introduction to the Christian Reformed Church, but it need not be the only one. In its present form the MEPMC program requires a ten-week residency plus two weeks at the seminary campus at a later time. For a candidate who lives relatively close to Calvin Theological Seminary, this may well be the preferred route. But many candidates are called to serve a church at a greater distance from the seminary. This takes the candidate away from his local ministry, straining the relationships that have already begun to form. Also, the candidate will often be forced to leave behind family for an extended period of time, creating additional stress for spouses and children.

It might be argued that classes have not done a consistently good job of supervising candidates into the denomination. Synodical deputies have been chided for some of the questions they have asked of candidates, since, as they have been told, "This candidate has not gone to Calvin Theological Seminary, so give him a break." Synod should expect a consistency, shaped by the standards for ministry, and classical ministerial candidacy committees must strive to uphold those standards. We also observe that classical examinations vary widely in content and time devoted to them. We believe that classical examinations should be thorough, reflecting the importance of this step for those entering the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Synodical deputies should insist upon the basic guidelines for examinations defined in the Church Order Supplement, and the Candidacy Committee might assist the classes with suggestions about the content of such examinations. The Candidacy Committee has a vital role in keeping the classes informed on the standards for ministry and making sure that CMLTs adhere to them.

While the seminary has an important role in preparing candidates for ministry, we do not believe that it is the only path for ministers coming into the CRC from other denominations. Our research has shown that denominations that have designated their seminaries as "gatekeepers" for entrance into ministry, have not fared better than those that allowed alternate routes to ministry. However, we believe that Calvin Theological Seminary can contribute in significant ways to the Article 8-c process.

### *C. Envisioning a process*

The CMLT should take an active role in the process even before a call is issued so that the candidate is well informed about the standards for ministry in the CRC and well aware of Christian Reformed practice. Perhaps a two-week visit to the seminary with an intensive focus on the above areas and introductions to denominational leaders and the denominational offices could round out preparation for ministry and ordination.

Calvin Theological Seminary could design a number of distance learning classes in critical areas such as Christian Reformed church history, church polity, and Reformed creeds. The CMLT should be responsible for appointing mentors to meet with the candidate in these areas to encourage the process of assimilation into the Christian Reformed Church.

The Candidacy Committee could be of great help to the classes by developing assessment tools, based on the standards for ministry, that would help the CMLT assess the character of the candidate and determine the steps necessary to remedy deficiencies. It is possible that a classis might determine that the best solution is still the MEPMC program at Calvin Theological Seminary. But there should be a range of solutions that the classis can explore with the assistance of the Candidacy Committee.

### III. Overture

Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures synod to change Church Order Article 8-c to read

Ministers of other denominations desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be required to meet the standards for ministry set by synod under the supervision of the classis.

*Grounds:*

1. The classis is strategically placed for assessing the candidate's character and preparation for ministry and for correcting deficiencies.
2. A partnership of synodical and classical candidacy committees will ensure that agreed-upon synodical standards for ministry are upheld.

Classis Northcentral Iowa  
Thomas J. Vos, stated clerk

## Overture 14: Revise Church Order Article 23 to Permit the Ordination of Ministry Associates as Ministers of the Word

### I. History

Synod 2007 created an excellent track for ministry associates. This track respected the authority of the local congregation and classis in recruiting and mobilizing leaders to plant new churches and serve existing churches. This overture addresses two issues. First, for ministry associates who are church planters of a new work, this overture changes the current Church Order Article 23-b. Second, this overture adds another path for ministry associates serving in an existing church to be ordained as ministers of the Word. This will be designated Article 23-c.

Currently Article 23-b and Article 23-c read:

b. Ordinarily, the office of ministry associates who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church. However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, ministry associates may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister of the Word is installed or until they have served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition.



c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left.

## II. Proposal

We propose the change in Church Order Article 23-b and Article 23-c to read:

b. A ministry associate who gathers a group of believers and helps it to become an organized church may continue to serve that church for a transition period of up to three years. The ministry associate, in consultation with the council and classis, will consider the likelihood that the ministry associate has demonstrated the exceptional qualities needed for eligibility to be ordained as a minister of the Word under Article 7. If so, the newly organized church may call the ministry associate to become a minister of the Word, subject to examination by classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Otherwise, the office of the ministry associate will end after the transition period or after an ordained minister of the Word is installed.

c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left. A ministry associate who has served an organized congregation effectively for five years shall be considered to have demonstrated the exceptional qualities required by Church Order Article 7 and is eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word upon the acceptance of a call, successful examination by classis, and the concurrence of synodical deputies.

## III. Background

The Christian Reformed Church struggled for many decades with what to do with non-theologically trained members of their congregations who felt the call to engage in evangelism and missionary work, whether domestically or abroad. The issue first came to a head when Synod 1976 voted to defeat both the majority and minority report which called for the ordination of evangelists as a distinct office or as a subset of minister of the Word.<sup>1</sup> But the issue came up again in 1978, when synod decided to approve the creation of a fourth office of the church: evangelist. At that time very precise restrictions were placed on the office of evangelist to help it to pass after being defeated in 1976. One of these restrictions was to limit the office of evangelist

<sup>1</sup> *Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 60-63.



to emerging congregations only until organization.<sup>2</sup> The limitations of the office of evangelist were clarified in 1979.<sup>3</sup> Synod 1979 wrote this segment of Church Order Article 23-b: "The office of ministry associates (then evangelists) who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church." By 1986 it was obvious that it was not advisable to evict evangelists from the churches they had planted on the day that their church organized, so the current form of this article was drafted.<sup>4</sup> Synod 1994 expanded the responsibilities of evangelists to include ministry workers who work under a minister of the Word in an established congregation in the work of evangelism. And in following years the responsibilities of evangelists came to include those of ministers of education, chaplains, youth workers, and music ministers. These developments were approved by succeeding synods. It was at Synod 2003 that the office of *evangelist* was changed to *ministry associate* to reflect this broader meaning.<sup>5</sup>

While this article has not changed since 1979 with the exception of the name of the office changing from *evangelist* to *ministry associate*, the fourth office of the Christian Reformed Church has come to be a very different office than the office created in 1978. The current wording of this article reflects a different time in the CRC when there was a fight to just get the office of evangelist approved in the first place. It reflects the history of ministry associate which was designed exclusively for the work of planting new churches and establishing mission stations. Since then, ministry associates have evolved considerably from such a narrowly defined position in the church. Church Order Article 23-b is antiquated by the evolution of the office of ministry associate. It addresses a situation that only some ministry associates are in—that of organizing a church plant in the CRC. Synod 2000 attempted to address how evangelists may at some point enter ministry as ministers of the Word, but that matter was sent back to be studied further, leaving Article 23-b as an ordinary ending point for experienced church-planting ministry associates who have demonstrated that they are well prepared for ministry.<sup>6</sup>

The trend established at Synod 2007 has broadened our understanding of ministry associates. This new trend seems to be giving the congregation and classis the authority and responsibility to raise up grassroots leaders from the churches who can be ordained as ministry associates, whether that be in a new church planting situation or an existing church staffing situation. Therefore, Church Order Article 23 needs to be updated to reflect this new reality with completion of this process, the ordination of these leaders to full ministry of the Word via Article 7 if their calling, character, experience, and gifts warrant such a designation. A local congregation and classis shall make this determination.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 74-78.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Acts of Synod 1986*, pp. 601-02.

<sup>5</sup> *Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 609-13..

<sup>6</sup> *Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 704-5.

#### IV. Overture

Classis Chicago South overtures Synod 2008 to

A. Adopt the proposal of Synod 2007 regarding ministry associates in Church Order Article 23-d.

B. Change Church Order Article 23-b to read as follows:

b. A ministry associate who gathers a group of believers and helps it to become an organized church may continue to serve that church for a transition period of up to three years. The ministry associate, in consultation with the council and classis, will consider the likelihood that the ministry associate has demonstrated the exceptional qualities needed for eligibility to be ordained as a minister of the Word under Article 7. If so, the newly organized church may call the ministry associate to become a minister of the Word, subject to examination by classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Otherwise, the office of the ministry associate will end after the transition period or after an ordained minister of the Word is installed.

C. Change Church Order Article 23-c to read as follows:

c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left. A ministry associate who has served an organized congregation effectively for five years shall be considered to have demonstrated the exceptional qualities required by Church Order Article 7 and is eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word upon the acceptance of a call, successful examination by classis, and the concurrence of synodical deputies.

D. Inform the classes and the Candidacy Committee of this change in the Church Order.

E. Make changes in Article 7 to reflect this change in Article 23.

*Grounds:*

1. Currently successful church planters who are ordained ministry associates have no incentive to bring their self-sufficient church to organization because it could jeopardize their job as pastor of their church. Depending on the classis, the current reading of Church Order Article 23-b could result in their removal from office after a reasonable period of time. Thus, many emerging congregations, while self-sufficient, are still not requesting organization after ten or even twenty years of emerging status.
2. Emerging congregations do not pay ministry shares or participate in the full life of the denomination. Creating an incentive for ministry

associates to bring their churches to organization benefits the denomination by having these congregations participate in the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Christian Reformed Church and its ministries, both financially and administratively.

3. Emerging congregations often do not feel as much denominational loyalty as organized congregations. Encouraging the organization of emerging congregations that are self-sufficient and ordaining their pastor as minister of the Word would increase denominational loyalty in a congregation of people that are typically coming from a non-Christian Reformed background.
4. Ministry associates can often feel that they have a vicarious hold on vocational ministry. Once their current charge ends, they often wonder where they will go next. By offering ministry associates who have demonstrated their effectiveness for ministry the prospect of ordination as a minister of the Word, we give ministry associates the prospect that their hard work for the Christian Reformed Church and their sacrifice of their former career may result in a lifetime of ministry.
5. These proposed changes do not weaken the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to theological education as the ordinary route to ministry. Most Article 7 ministers in recent years are already ministry associates; this proposal merely streamlines what is already happening and creates a more level playing field for ministry associates seeking ordination, regardless of which classis they are in. It is much more risky and indeterminate for a ministry associate to embark on planting a church that will survive and become organized than for someone to take the required education to become a minister of the Word through Church Order Article 6. It also takes much more time at a lower pay scale for a ministry associate serving an organized church to become eligible to become a minister of the Word than it would have taken to get the three years of education required for a master of divinity degree. Not everyone is eligible to be ordained as ministry associates, only those who show considerable promise and knowledge for ministry are selected. Ministry associates becoming ministers of the Word through a revised Article 23-b and Article 7 would have acquired much of the theological knowledge and practical experience through years of service to the church. Ministry associates whose work was not considered effective by their classis would not be eligible to pursue ordination as ministers of the Word through Article 7.
6. These proposed changes could help our churches better recruit leaders for planting churches.
7. These proposed changes remove the last provision of the Church Order that presumes a very narrowly defined office of ministry associate.
8. These proposed changes keep local congregations and local classes as credentialing entities of the CRC along with the Candidacy Committee (formerly Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee). These proposals address many of the concerns of the church and the Candidacy Committee concerning qualified and called Article 7 pastors.

Classis Chicago South

Richard E. Williams, stated clerk

## Overture 15: Revise Church Order Articles 23-b and 23-c

### I. Introduction

Synod 2007 created an excellent track for ministry associates. This track respected the authority of the local congregation and classis in recruiting and mobilizing leaders to plant new churches and serve existing churches. This overture addresses two issues. First, this overture proposes change to the current Church Order Article 23-b for ministry associates who are church planters of a new work. Second, this overture adds another path for ministry associates serving in an existing church to be ordained as ministers of the Word. This will be designated as Church Order Article 23-c.

The current Church Order Articles 23-b and 23-c read as follows:

b. Ordinarily, the office of ministry associates who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church. However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, ministry associates may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister of the Word is installed or until they have served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition. Ministry associates who continue to serve a newly organized congregation beyond this reasonable period of transition must seek the permission of classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left.

### II. Background history of Article 23

The Christian Reformed Church struggled for many decades over what to do with non-theologically trained members who felt the call to engage in evangelism and missionary work domestically or abroad. The issue first came to a head when Synod 1976 voted to defeat both the majority and minority report which called for the ordination of evangelists as a distinct office or as a subset of minister of the Word.<sup>1</sup> The issue came up again in 1978, when synod decided to approve the creation of a fourth office of the church—evangelist. At that time, very precise restrictions were placed on the office of evangelist to help it pass after being defeated in 1976. One of these restrictions was to limit the office of evangelist to emerging congregations only until their organization.<sup>2</sup> The limitations of the office of evangelist were clarified in 1979.<sup>3</sup> Synod 1979 wrote the following segment of Church Order Article 23-b: “the office of evangelist [ministry associates] who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church.” By 1986 it was obvious that it was not advisable to evict evangelists from the churches they had planted on the day that their church was organized, so the current form of this Church Order Article was

<sup>1</sup> *Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 74-78.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 17.

drafted.<sup>4</sup> Synod 1994 expanded the responsibilities of evangelists to include ministry workers who work under a minister of the Word in an established congregation in the work of evangelism. In following years the responsibilities evangelists could take up came to include ministers of education, chaplains, youth workers, and music ministers. These developments were approved by succeeding synods. It was at Synod 2003 that the office of evangelist was changed to *ministry associate* to reflect the broader meaning.<sup>5</sup>

While this article has not changed since 1979, with the exception of the name of the office changing from *evangelist* to *ministry associate*, the fourth office of the Christian Reformed Church has come to be a very different office than the office created in 1978. The current wording of Church Order Article 23 reflects a different time in the CRC when there was a fight just to get the office of evangelist approved in the first place. It reflects the history of ministry associate, which was designed exclusively for the work of planting new churches and establishing mission stations. Since then, ministry associates have evolved considerably from such a narrowly defined position in the church. Church Order Article 23-b is antiquated by the evolution of the office of ministry associate. It addresses a situation that only some ministry associates are in—that of organizing a church plant in the CRC. Synod 2000 attempted to address how evangelists may at some point enter ministry as ministers of the Word, but it was sent back to be studied further, leaving Church Order Article 23-b as an ordinary ending point for experienced church planting ministry associates who have demonstrated that they are well prepared for ministry.<sup>6</sup>

The trend established at Synod 2007 has broadened our understanding of ministry associates. This new trend seems to be giving the congregation and classis the authority and responsibility to raise up grassroots leaders from the churches who can be ordained as ministry associates, whether that be in a new church planting situation or an existing church staffing situation. Therefore, Church Order Article 23 needs to be updated to reflect this new reality with completion of this process, the ordination of these leaders to full ministry of the Word via Article 7 if their calling, character, experience, and gifts warrant such a designation. A local congregation and classis shall make this determination.

### III. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2008 to revise Church Order Articles 23-b and 23-c to read as follows:

- b. Ordinarily a ministry associate who gathers a group of believers and helps it to become an organized church may continue to serve that church for a transition period of up to three years. The ministry associate, in consultation with the council and the classis, will consider the likelihood that the ministry associate has demonstrated the exceptional qualities needed for eligibility to

<sup>4</sup> *Acts of Synod 1986*, pp. 601-2.

<sup>5</sup> *Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 609-13.

<sup>6</sup> *Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 704-5.

be ordained as a minister of the Word under Article 7. If so, the newly organized church may call the ministry associate to become a minister of the Word, subject to examination by classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Otherwise the office of the ministry associate will end after the transition period or after an ordained minister of the Word is installed.

c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left. A ministry associate who has served an organized congregation effectively for five years shall be considered to have demonstrated the exceptional qualities required by Church Order Article 7 and is eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word upon the acceptance of a call, successful examination by classis, and the concurrence of synodical deputies.

*Grounds:*

1. Currently successful church planters who are ordained ministry associates have no incentive to bring their self-sufficient church to organization as it could jeopardize their job as pastor of their church. Depending on the classis, the current reading of Church Order Article 23-b could result in their removal from office after a “reasonable” period of time. Thus, many emerging congregations, while self-sufficient, are still not requesting organization after ten or even twenty years of emerging status.
2. Emerging congregations do not pay ministry shares or participate in the full life of the denomination. Creating an incentive for ministry associates to bring their churches to organization benefits the denomination by having these congregations participate in the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Christian Reformed Church and its ministries, both financially and administratively.
3. Emerging congregations often do not feel as much denominational loyalty as organized congregations. Encouraging the organization of emerging churches that are self-sufficient, and ordaining their pastor as minister of the Word would increase denominational loyalty in a congregation of people that are typically coming from a non-Christian Reformed background.
4. Ministry associates can often feel that they have a vicarious hold on vocational ministry. Once their current charge ends, they often wonder where they will go next. By offering ministry associates who have demonstrated their effectiveness for ministry the prospect of ordination as a minister of the Word, we give ministry associates the prospect that their hard work for the Christian Reformed Church and their sacrifice of their former career may result in a lifetime ministry.

5. These proposed changes do not weaken the Christian Reformed Church's commitment to theological education as the ordinary route to ministry. Most Article 7 pastors in recent years previously served as ministry associates; this proposal merely streamlines what is already happening and creates a more level playing field for ministry associates seeking ordination, regardless of which classis they are in. It is much more risky and indeterminate for a ministry associate to embark on planting a church that will survive and become organized than for someone to take the required education to become a minister of the Word through Church Order Article 6. It also takes much more time at a lower pay scale for a ministry associate serving an organized church to become eligible to become a minister of the Word than it would have taken to get the three years of education required for a master of divinity degree. Not everyone is eligible to be ordained as a ministry associate, only those who show considerable promise and knowledge for ministry are selected. Ministry associates becoming ministers of the Word through a *revised* Article 23-b and Article 7 would have acquired much of the theological knowledge and practical experience through years of service to the church. Ministry associates whose work was not considered effective by their classis would not be eligible to pursue ordination as ministers of the Word through Article 7.
6. These proposed changes could help our churches better recruit leaders for planting churches.
7. These proposed changes remove the last provision of the Church Order that presumes a very narrowly defined office of ministry associate.
8. These proposed changes keep local congregations and local classes as credentialing entities of the CRC along with the Candidacy Committee. These proposals address many of the concerns of the church and Candidacy Committee concerning qualified and called Article 7 pastors.

Classis Illiana

Robert L. Jipping, stated clerk

#### **Overture 16: Add the Word *Pray* to Church Order Article 12-a**

Classis Eastern Canada overtures Synod 2008 to add the word *pray* to the list of things a minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall do, as found in Church Order Article 12-a. The revised Church Order Article would read as follows (change in *italic*):

A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, *pray*, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. The minister, with the elders, shall supervise the congregation and fellow office-bearers, exercise admonition and discipline, and see to it that everything is done decently and in order. The minister, with the elders, shall exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism.

*Grounds:*

1. In the early church, when the work of ministry became overwhelming, the apostles said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of



the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4).

2. In Colossians 4:2-6 Paul says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And *pray* for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."
3. As God's house is to be called "a house of prayer" (Isa. 56:7; Mark 11:17), so the ordained leader in that house must be a leader of prayer. That expectation should be clearly stated in our Church Order.
4. In Acts 14:23 we read that Paul and Barnabas installed newly ordained elders in the churches and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord.
5. If it is true of all believers, as stated in Romans 12:12, that they must "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer," then how much more for the leaders who must lead by example? In James 5:14 we read that a sick person "*should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*"
6. The disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), so the ordained leaders of God's people are to teach them to pray, and thus must themselves be growing people of prayer. If the pastor is serving a teaching role in the church, then must not that pastor along with the elders and deacons be a person of prayer?
7. Prayer was obviously a crucial aspect of ministry in the early church, and it should be listed in our Church Order as a crucial aspect of the pastor today as well.

Classis Eastern Canada  
James Kooistra, stated clerk

## **Overture 17: Emphasize Use of the Form of Subscription**

### **I. Introduction**

As our denomination faces the challenge of postmodernism, we believe it important to re-emphasize our confessional unity. We believe the Form of Subscription has been neglected and our unity in truth is threatened by a thinning veneer of unity without substance. We believe that synod would do well to call each church (following officebearer elections) to publicly read the present Form of Subscription and require officebearers to sign it, thereby recommitting themselves to our confessional unity.

### **II. Historical background**

The Form of Subscription was formulated during the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort) in 1618-1619 and thereafter brought into use in the Dutch Reformed churches, a.k.a. Nederlands Hervormde Kerk (NHK). After wrangling over



various interpretations of Scripture, particularly with the Remonstrants, it was decided that for a church to maintain a united witness its officebearers must be united on the basic doctrines of Scripture. The Form of Subscription served as an oath that bound the church together around a common interpretation.

The next national synod was convened in 1815-1816 where, among many major changes made, the NHK altered the wording of the Form of Subscription that had been preserved since Dort. "The new oath allowed candidates to accept the doctrines of the three official creeds 'in so far as' (rather than 'because') they agreed with Scripture" (*Family Quarrels*, Bruins/Swierenga, p. 10). This sounds proper on the surface because it prioritizes Scripture over the confessions, as should be done, but it also left no unifying interpretation of Scripture. In fact, the church was left powerless to counter those who denied even the Trinity or other vital teachings.

It was this open door that led to an increased liberalism in the NHK against which many stood in the conventicles and the Reveil over subsequent years. There was a great effort to bring reform within the national church, but nevertheless separation (*Afscheiding*) resulted in 1834, tearing the church, families, and country apart. Subsequently those in the separated churches, a.k.a. *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN), returned to the Form of Subscription from Dort.

Back in the NHK, the growth of liberalism did not eclipse Reformed orthodoxy as "many individual ministers, elders, deacons, consistories and other members continued to hold to the reformed faith and life."<sup>1</sup> A pastor emeritus and elder, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, organized like-minded consistory members into fellowships in 1872 and in 1882. At the meetings he read papers on church reformation.

The NHK situation changed in 1883 when the synod again revised the Form of Subscription. Says Frank Vanden Berg:

There had been a time when candidates for gospel ministry had been required to promise that they would preach the Word of God in accordance with, and as interpreted in the three forms of unity. This pledge had already been altered to read that the candidate pledged himself to maintain the spirit and major content of the Confession. Now, in 1883, the subscription of ministers-to-be was deleted. No mention was made of 'the full counsel of God as to salvation, particularly his grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.' Aspiring clergymen merely agreed 'to promote the interests of the kingdom of God in general and especially those of the state church.' This radical innovation became effective January 15, 1883.<sup>2</sup>

This became a watershed for what was known as the 1886 *doleantie* movement. Dr. Kuyper and others responded to this change by writing pamphlets describing their sorrow (*doleantie* is from the latin *dolere*: to mourn). The *doleantie*'s argument went basically as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- We constitute the historic Reformed Church of the Netherlands.
- We have not seceded from the state church.
- We are not a new church or denomination.

<sup>1</sup> Vanden Berg, Frank. *Abraham Kuyper*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960, pp. 116-17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 135.

- We have cast off the yoke of 1816 (new organization and Form of Subscription).
- We leave the state church provisionally with hopes that the entire state church will cast off the yoke of 1816 and so continue the Reformed Church of Holland.
- We do not waive our rights to the church's buildings and all other forms of wealth but, on account of the superior power of the opposition, we abstain for the time being from exercising these rights.
- We mourn and grieve over the state of the church and over the injustices presently being committed against us.

By 1887 some 200 congregations with a total membership of about 100,000 left the state church. They stressed local churches living in accord with and fraternizing on the basis of the three forms of unity and the Dort church order.<sup>4</sup> In all this time, Dr. Kuyper was often attacked. But finally in 1892 the Afscheiding and Doleantie merged to form the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland under the auspices of the Form of Subscription of Dort. By 1900 this church came to constitute 8 percent of the population of the Netherlands.

Our current Form of Subscription also maintains the essence and purpose of the original document from Dort. It serves the churches well in providing a unity of interpretation and belief of what Scripture teaches. As has been seen from our collective history, such a document is vital to maintaining the unity of the church.

### III. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2008 to re-emphasize our confessional unity by calling churches, after selection of officebearers, to publicly read and require all new officebearers to sign the present Form of Subscription.

*Grounds:*

1. Our unity in the gospel (as outlined in our confessions) should be re-affirmed against the tendency to unite around less important things (age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.).
2. This unity should be informed by biblical interpretation that is bigger than our immediate experience and has stood the test of time and church councils.
3. Our unity should be founded on biblical doctrines defended ably in the past and brought to bear upon the same temptations today.<sup>5</sup>
4. Our forms of unity provide protection from the tyranny of strong personalities, a safeguard for consistories and local church members.
5. The history of the Dutch Reformed Churches has shown that avoiding use of or altering the Form of Subscription can precipitate an exodus by those desiring to remain confessionally united.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 52, Q. & A. 127 calls our enemies "the devil, the world, and our own flesh."

<sup>6</sup> Exhibited by the 1834 Afscheiding and 1886 Doleantie movements as seen by two books: *Secession, Doleantie, and Union: 1834-1892* by Hendrik Bouma (esp. pp. 281ff) and *Abraham Kuyper* by Frank Vanden Berg (esp. pp. 115-44).

6. The unity and vitality of our denomination has faltered as the Form of Subscription has fallen into disuse.<sup>7</sup>
7. Our denominational call for classis renewal would, in fact, be enhanced by a new consideration of our great commonalities in the creeds and confessions.
8. Recently renewed emphasis on Calvinism has breathed new life into the seminaries, preachers, and pews of other denominations.<sup>8</sup> It would seem unwise to move away from a rich heritage being recovered by others<sup>9</sup> when that heritage is ours to give.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

## Overture 18: Re-emphasize Our Confessional Unity

### I. Introduction

As our denomination faces the challenge of postmodernism and other contemporary movements, we believe it important to re-emphasize our confessional unity. We believe the Form of Subscription (FOS) has been neglected and our unity in truth is threatened by a thinning veneer of unity without substance. We believe that synod would do well to call each church to study the FOS or Covenant of Ordination, whichever is current following Synod 2008, continue requiring officebearers to sign it, and prayerfully hold each other as individuals and congregations accountable to it, thereby recommitting to our confessional unity.

### II. Historical background

The FOS was formulated during the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort) in 1618-1619 and thereafter brought into use in the Dutch Reformed churches, a.k.a. Nederlands Hervormde Kerk (NHK). After wrangling over various interpretations of Scripture, particularly with the Remonstrants, it was decided that for a church to maintain a united witness its officebearers must be united on the basic doctrines of Scripture. The FOS served as an oath that bound the church together around a common interpretation.

The next national synod was convened in 1815-1816, where among many major changes made, the NHK slightly altered the wording of the FOS that had been preserved since Dort. "The new oath allowed candidates to accept the doctrines of the three official creeds 'in so far as' (rather than 'because')

<sup>7</sup> *Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435. Overture by Classis B.C. South-East.

<sup>8</sup> As noted by the magazine *Christianity Today* in its September 2006 article "Young, Restless, Reformed," pp. 32-38. The article especially notes the emphasis on the doctrine of our Canons of Dort, commonly known as TULIP.

<sup>9</sup> See also *A Hill on Which to Die* by Judge Paul Pressler (2002) Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tenn. Pressler speaks about a Calvinistic renewal in the Southern Baptist Convention. The dramatic growth in numbers of this denomination has been noted by others in recent years.

they agreed with Scripture.”<sup>1</sup> This sounds proper on the surface because it prioritizes Scripture over the confessions, as should be done, but it also left no unifying interpretation of Scripture. In fact, the church was left powerless to counter those who denied even the Trinity or other vital teachings.

It was this open door that led to an increased liberalism in the NHK against which many stood in the conventicles and the Reveil over subsequent years. There was a great effort to bring reform within the national church, but nevertheless separation (*Afscheiding*) resulted in 1834, tearing the church, families, and country apart. Subsequently those in the separated churches, a.k.a. *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN), returned to the Form of Subscription from Dort.

Back in the NHK, the growth of liberalism did not eclipse Reformed orthodoxy as “many individual ministers, elders, deacons, consistories and other members continued to hold to the reformed faith and life.”<sup>2</sup> A pastor emeritus and elder, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, organized like-minded consistory members into fellowships in 1872 and in 1882. At the meetings he read papers on church reformation.

The NHK situation changed in 1883 when the synod again revised the FOS. Says Frank Vanden Berg:

There had been a time when candidates for gospel ministry had been required to promise that they would preach the Word of God in accordance with, and as interpreted in the three forms of unity. This pledge had already been altered to read that the candidate pledged himself to maintain the spirit and major content of the Confession. Now, in 1883, the subscription of ministers-to-be was deleted. No mention was made of ‘the full counsel of God as to salvation, particularly his grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Aspiring clergymen merely agreed ‘to promote the interests of the kingdom of God in general and especially those of the state church.’ This radical innovation became effective January 15, 1883.<sup>3</sup>

This became a watershed for what was known as the 1886 Doleantie movement. Dr. Kuyper and others responded to this change by writing pamphlets describing their *sorrow* (*doleantie* is from the latin *dolere*: to mourn). The Doleantie’s argument went basically as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- We constitute the historic Reformed Church of the Netherlands.
- We have not seceded from the state church.
- We are not a new church or denomination.
- We have cast off the yoke of 1816 (new organization and Form of Subscription).
- We leave the state church provisionally with hopes that the entire state church will cast off the yoke of 1816 and so continue the Reformed Church of Holland.
- We do not waive our rights to the church’s buildings and all other forms of wealth but, on account of the superior power of the opposition, we abstain for the time being from exercising these rights.

<sup>1</sup> Bruins, Elton, and Robert Swierenga. *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Vanden Berg, Frank. *Abraham Kuyper*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960, pp. 116-17.

<sup>3</sup> Vanden Berg, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Vanden Berg, p. 135.

- We mourn and grieve over the state of the church and over the injustices presently being committed against us.

By 1887 some 200 congregations with a total membership of about 100,000 left the state church. They stressed local churches living in accord with and fraternizing on the basis of the three forms of unity and the *Dort Church Order*.<sup>5</sup> In all this time, Dr. Kuyper was often attacked. But finally in 1892 the *Afscheiding* and *Doleantie* merged to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* under the auspices of the Form of Subscription of Dort. By 1900 this church came to constitute 8 percent of the population of the Netherlands.

### III. Conclusion

Our current Form of Subscription also maintains the essence and purpose of the original document from Dort. It serves the churches well in providing a unity of interpretation and belief of what Scripture teaches. As has been seen from our collective history—not to mention other traditions with similar consequences—such a document is vital to maintaining the unity of the church. The recent committee report on the Form of Subscription and its subsequent revision highlight the little importance given to confessional unity in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Certainly, the Form of Subscription has no power itself to maintain this unity. We have to call for integrity and mutual accountability in the spirit of love for Christ and his church.

### IV. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to re-emphasize our confessional unity by calling churches to openly study the Form of Subscription (FOS), or, if adopted, the Covenant of Ordination for Officebearers in the CRCNA, whichever is current following Synod 2008; continuing to require officebearers to sign it; and prayerfully holding each other as individuals and congregations accountable to it, thereby recommitting to our confessional unity.

#### *Grounds:*

1. Our unity in the gospel (as outlined in our confessions) should be reaffirmed against the tendency to unite around less important things (age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, worship style, etc.).
2. This unity should be informed by biblical interpretation that is bigger than our immediate experience and has stood the test of time and church councils.
3. Our unity should be founded on biblical doctrines defended ably in the past and brought to bear upon the same temptations today.<sup>6</sup>
4. Our forms of unity provide protection from the tyranny of strong personalities, a safeguard for consistories and local church members.

<sup>5</sup> Vanden Berg, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 52, Q. and A. 127 calls our enemies "the devil, the world, and our own flesh."

5. The history of the Dutch Reformed Churches has shown that avoiding use of or altering the available means of affirming confessional unity has had an adverse affect on the life of the church.<sup>7</sup>
6. The unity and vitality of our denomination has faltered as the FOS has fallen into disuse.<sup>8</sup>
7. Our denominational call for classis renewal would be enhanced by a new consideration of our great commonalities in the creeds and confessions.
8. Recently renewed emphasis on Calvinism and Reformed theology in the broader evangelical church has breathed new life into the seminaries, preachers, and pews of other denominations.<sup>9</sup> It would seem unwise to move away from a rich heritage being recovered by others<sup>10</sup> when that heritage is ours to give.

Classis Holland

Anthony L. Louwerse, stated clerk

## Overture 19: Reject or Revise the Proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers

### I. Introduction

Upon careful study of the recently proposed overhaul of the Christian Reformed Church's Form of Subscription, Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures synod to reject the "Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA," *unless* certain specified changes are made to preserve its integrity as an objective statement of doctrinal agreement.

We believe that the committee has substantially overstepped Synod 2005's simple mandate, which reads as follows:

That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod . . . with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription.

(*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735)

Instead of carrying out this mandate, the committee has substantially altered the meaning of our present Form of Subscription. Specifically we are concerned that the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers reduces the standards for officers by not requiring officers to *believe* that the objective doctrines contained in our historical creeds are true.

<sup>7</sup> Exhibited by the 1834 Afscheiding and 1886 Doleantie movements as seen by two books: *Secession, Doleantie, and Union: 1834-1892* by Hendrik Bouma (esp. pp. 281ff) and *Abraham Kuyper* by Frank Vanden Berg (esp. pp. 115-44).

<sup>8</sup> *Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435. Overture by Classis B.C. South-East.

<sup>9</sup> As noted by the magazine *Christianity Today* in its September 2006 article "Young, Restless, Reformed," pp. 32-38. The article especially notes the emphasis on the doctrine of our Canons of Dort, commonly known as TULIP.

<sup>10</sup> See also *A Hill on Which to Die* by Judge Paul Pressler (2002) Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tenn. Pressler speaks about a Calvinistic renewal in the Southern Baptist Convention. The dramatic growth in numbers of this denomination has been noted by others in recent years.

We summarize three difficulties in accepting the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers:

*A. Biblical orthodoxy is replaced by postmodernism*

The committee report discards the foundational premise that doctrinal standards for officebearers should be employed as an instrument for maintaining doctrinal orthodoxy. They write,

That a regulatory instrument is needed to keep us orthodox . . . is increasingly being called into question. Increased cultural and ethnic diversity, the increase of new church plants and . . . postmodernism are among the factors raising these questions.

In place of accepting time-honored objective standards of doctrinal orthodoxy, the report repeatedly calls for us to embrace postmodernism—the worldview that treats objective truths as relative and subject to change across various times and cultures.

We disagree. God does not change. Humanity’s fundamental need (sin and misery) does not change. God’s solution (deliverance from sin and misery) does not change. In a postmodern age, it is particularly incumbent upon the church that officebearers *unequivocally believe and teach* the objective biblical grounds for our only comfort—the timeless truths of God.

Since the proposed covenant does not require officers to believe these objective doctrines are true today, it is an insufficient standard for officebearers and inconsistent with the Form of Subscription.

*B. Objective clarity is replaced with an ambiguous flexibility*

The proposed covenant intentionally evades identifying doctrines of our historic confessions as being objectively “true.” They explain:

A flexible assumption has been built into the wording of this covenant. . . . By accepting the historic confessions as [merely] “faithful in their time and place,” we will avoid both a hardening of contextual truth into timeless truth and the fostering of a divisive attitude toward other Christians.

The committee is telling us here that its underlying purpose is to *reclassify* all the objective truths summarized in our historic confessions as “contextual truths.” Specifically, the report rejects holding them as “timeless truth.” Although we would agree that a few statements within our historical confessions may be “time and place” conditioned, we strongly disagree with the committee’s willingness to lump all the objective doctrines within our historic creeds into the category of merely “contextual truth” as opposed to “timeless truth.” The ambiguous statement that our historic confessions are merely “faithful expressions of the gospel in their time” leaves open the question of whether the gospel itself changes over the years. That is too flexible.

We believe that allowing this degree of doctrinal flexibility so weakens the doctrinal qualifications for officebearers that it contradicts the very foundations of the Form of Subscription.

*C. The proposed covenant falls short of asking officebearers to believe any doctrines*

Carefully note: The proposed covenant does not require its signers to believe any of the particular doctrines contained in our three forms of unity.

The present Form of Subscription calls for signers to “sincerely believe . . . agree with . . . teach . . . defend . . . and to not contradict” the doctrines contained in our three forms of unity. By sharp contrast, the proposed Doctrinal



Covenant for Officebearers merely asks signers to *accept* the historic confessions as time-conditioned statements that may have more or less value for us today and to “be shaped and governed by . . . and promote” them. This represents the removal of the language of personal commitment. Officers should be expected to *personally believe* these doctrines.

For example, by the present wording of the covenant, a signer could be personally uncertain, ambivalent, or even disagree with such things as the virgin birth, infant baptism, predestination, the infallibility of Scripture, total depravity, and so forth, while also promising to “be shaped and governed by . . . and promote them” as being “expressions of the gospel in their time and place.”

The weakness of the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers is seen in the fact that it falls short of requiring signers to actually *believe* that the doctrines themselves are true.

## II. Conclusion

Although we are unable to affirm the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in its present form, we believe that much of the committee’s work can be preserved by making the following simple changes to their existing language (words to be added are underlined; words to be removed are ~~struck out~~):

### A Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA

We, the undersigned officebearers of the CRCNA, heartily accept the authority of the Word of God as received in the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which reveal the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ, namely the reconciliation of all things in him, and we submit to them in all matters of life and faith.

We ~~believe accept~~ the historic confessions: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, ~~to be as the church’s~~ faithful expressions of the gospel ~~in their time~~ which define the ~~tradition of our~~ Reformed understanding of Scripture and continue to direct us today.

With thankfulness for these expressions of faith we promise to be shaped and governed by them and to promote them in our various callings: preaching, teaching, writing, and serving; making grateful use of the church’s testimony of faith for our time, *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

Should we at any time come to believe that our views are irreconcilable with either Holy Scripture or our historic confessions, ~~the witness of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the above documents has become irreconcilable to the Holy Scriptures~~, we will communicate our views to the church according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its Supplements and promise to submit to its judgment.



We honor this covenant out of a desire to remain rooted in Scripture and ~~to engaged~~ with our world tradition so that we will be diligent in living out this witness today to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### III. Overture

Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures synod to reject the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers unless the changes recommended above are made to guard the existing doctrinal qualifications for church officers.

*Grounds:*

1. The proposed covenant does not fulfill synod's mandate "that a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to synod . . . with the understanding that the purpose of the revisions is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735).
2. The elimination of objective doctrinal standards for church officers will impair the CRC's ability to minister *God's truth* in a world that increasingly disavows the ability to know truth.
3. Reducing the value of our historic creeds—namely the three forms of unity—by affirming that they were faithful expressions merely "in their time" leaves insufficient objective grounds for officers to confess their common beliefs.
4. The flexible ambiguity of the proposed covenant substantially alters and obscures the meaning of the Form of Subscription.
5. Reduced doctrinal standards for officers will result in friction and disunity in the CRC.

Classis Northcentral Iowa  
Thomas J. Vos, stated clerk

### Overture 20: Recommit the Covenant of Ordination

Classis Lake Erie overtures Synod 2008 to recommit the Covenant of Ordination to the committee to clarify and specify how the confessions will serve to shape and guide the CRC for the future.

*Ground:* The language of the Covenant of Ordination is imprecise and permits different interpretations.

Classis Lake Erie  
Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

### Overture 21: Do Not Adopt the Proposed Covenant of Ordination

Classis Iakota overtures synod to not adopt the proposed Covenant of Ordination.

*Grounds:*

1. Contrary to the rationale offered in section IV of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee report, the purpose of creeds and a required

subscription to those creeds is to affirm that certain questions are settled in order to avoid embroiling the church in needless controversy. While we hope and pray the officebearers of the church will reflect on these doctrines, and we affirm that these creeds are not themselves Scripture, it is simply not true that one cannot affirm truths discovered and expressed in a different time by a different culture. Where there is difficulty or a need for revision or clarification, the church has established a formal process for challenging the creeds, either in whole or in part, by means of a gravamen. That some find this process too lengthy or formal is a measure of their impatience, not the propriety of the process or the Form of Subscription that binds us to it.

2. One does not solve a problem of heterodoxy by acquiescing to it. If councils and classes are not adhering to Church Order Article 5 or if on signing the Form of Subscription officebearers are not carrying out the promise made (a charge made within the committee report), we have an issue with honesty and integrity in some of our officebearers, not with the Form of Subscription. If the proposed Covenant of Ordination is intended to address this problem of integrity (and the committee indicates that it is), it fails. Indeed, by stating in the rationale that they expect these settled doctrines to be debated, and by changing the requirement to merely being shaped by the creeds, the proposed revision appears rather to affirm it and even invites officebearers to diverge from the historic confessions.
3. Including *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* along with the historic Reformed confessions grants a status to that document never intended and not warranted by its content. In any event, one should not attempt to bind the consciences of officebearers to a document that is designed to change on a regular and frequent basis—as it must if it is to remain contemporary. The Form of Subscription binds us to doctrine that is settled, not testimonies that change every ten to twenty years.
4. The proposed Covenant of Ordination would apply only to those who are officebearers, thus excluding all professors at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary who are not elders, deacons, ministers, or ministry associates in their congregations, weakening—if not outrightly severing—the confessional tie that binds these institutions to each other and the denomination. (The current Form of Subscription reads “servants of the Word of God.”)
5. The committee’s mandate was not to change the meaning of the Form of Subscription, but to clarify that meaning by means of a revision.

Classis Iakota

Marvin Van Donselaar, stated clerk

## Overture 22: Withhold Action on the Form of Subscription Revision Committee Report and Appoint a New Committee to Update the Language of the Form of Subscription

### I. Background

The Form of Subscription Revision Committee was given the task of writing “a revised edition of the Form of Subscription” with the purpose being “to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735). What follows is our response to the recommendations they are bringing to Synod 2008.

We agree with the committee that we live in an ever-changing culture. However, living in such a culture makes it all the more necessary for us as a denomination to unite under the basic and biblical doctrinal beliefs of our Reformed confessions. Our concern is that the committee’s recommendation for a more flexible covenant incorporates a postmodern philosophy that will lead to the erosion of our denomination’s commitment to God’s Word and our Reformed confessions. Subscription to the creeds is more than remaining in a tradition. It must also mean an intentional and heartfelt commitment to certain doctrines that are part of the “once for all delivered” teaching of Holy Scripture (Jude 3).

### II. Our reasons for concern

In order to explain this concern more fully, we will address (1) the mandate of the committee, (2) the rationale of the recommendation, and (3) the covenant of ordination itself.

#### A. *The mandate of the committee*

Synod 2005 gave the Form of Subscription Revision Committee the following mandate: “That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2007 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735). The consensus of our classis is that the committee wrongly went beyond this mandate. Instead of clarifying the meaning of the Form of Subscription, the committee is recommending an altogether new document. This document has a different name, includes *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* alongside the confessions, alters the intent of the Form of Subscription, and excludes the promise to defend the teachings of the Three Forms of Unity, as well as the “prescribed procedures” to be followed if officebearers have any difficulties with the doctrines of the confessions.

The mandate of synod speaks of a *revision* to be drafted with the purpose to *clarify* the meaning of the Form of Subscription, *not* for the committee to *redraft* the Form of Subscription in order to *change* the meaning of it. Yet, we believe this is what the committee has done.

#### B. *The rationale of the recommendation*

When the committee provides their “rationale for the proposed Form of Subscription rewrite,” some parts of the rationale concern us. The following are some examples:

By accepting the historic confessions as faithful for their time and place, we will avoid both a hardening of contextualized truth into timeless truth and the fostering of a divisive attitude toward other Christians.

(2007 Form of Subscription Revision Committee Draft Report, p. 5)

*Note:* Does not appear in the final Form of Subscription Revision Committee Report.

Speaking of the historic confessions as “faithful for their time and place” can be taken to mean that they are not faithful for our time and place. We believe that the biblical truth expressed by the confessions is not relative. It is true for all times and places.

Issues [when it comes to disagreement over the historical confessions] have included the revelations of ongoing scholarship that do not coincide with earlier understandings, ideas objectionable to modern sensibilities, as well as the growing postmodern sense that one simply cannot, in any definitive fashion, fully subscribe to the understanding from a cultural time and place not one’s own.

(2007 Form of Subscription Revision Committee Draft Report, p. 6)

*Note:* Does not appear in the final Form of Subscription Revision Committee Report.

The postmodern idea that truth is relative should be rejected, not accepted and made a rationale for changing the Form of Subscription.

“A flexible assumption has been built into the wording of this covenant” (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 248, referring to the committee’s recommended covenant). Flexibility is not needed when it comes to confessing the basic biblical doctrines of the Three Forms of Unity.

As part of God’s universal church, we must and do grieve whenever divisive issues split his church. We long for the unity of the Spirit to be evident in the worldwide church. However, living in the twenty-first century, as in every century, the church must uphold and defend the truth of God’s Word and the Reformed confessions that fully and clearly express the timeless truth of that Word. Therefore, when these doctrines based on Scripture are countered and attacked, we as Christians are not called to be more flexible but to defend God’s unbending truth. At the same time, as we engage in that defense, our intent is not to show a cold, superior attitude but rather love and concern for those who have questions or reject the truth (2 Tim. 2:25-26).

### C. *The Covenant of Ordination itself*

We also have concerns regarding the recommended Covenant of Ordination for Officebearers in the CRCNA. We appreciate the fact that, at the beginning of this covenant, the authority of God’s Word is highlighted and affirmed. However, the rest of the covenant seems to deny that our confessions faithfully express the teaching of that authoritative Word for all times and places. The covenant places heavy emphasis on the importance of “our understanding” in our time and place. We must acknowledge that this emphasis is dangerous, since we live in a culture that demands for us to accept the understandings of other people when it comes to issues that have only one truth. And even though we strongly affirm the importance of engaging in an open dialogue with others, fruitful dialogue is possible only when we take our stand firmly on the truth of God’s Word as summarized and expressed by our confessions.

Another concern is the inclusion of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as part of the Covenant of Ordination. Including the Contem-

porary Testimony gives it confessional status, which it has never had up to this time.

We are troubled that in the Covenant of Ordination officebearers are no longer required to declare that they sincerely believe that the confessions “fully agree with the Word of God” or that they will defend these doctrines that are in complete agreement with Scripture. Instead, they vaguely need to promise that they will be “shaped by” the confessions.

We are concerned that the proposed Covenant of Ordination moves the CRCNA away from being a truly confessional church to one that merely keeps its creeds and confessions around as interesting testimonies to past commitments. The history of the Presbyterian Church USA in this regard is not encouraging. When that body adopted the Confession of 1967, it effectively removed the authority and function of its confessions and catechisms in its congregations. This report seems to be leading the CRCNA in the same direction. The committee speaks of the Three Forms of Unity retaining “pride of place” and yet only accepting the historic confessions “as faithful for their time and place.” The report suggests that the church has until now hardened “contextualized truth into a timeless truth” and fostered “a divisive attitude toward other Christians.” It does not substantiate this charge and does not seem to recognize that it is possible to be unwaveringly committed to specific doctrinal teaching while also respecting those who differ.

We are concerned that the Form of Subscription Revision Committee made the decision not to print the “prescribed procedures” within the Covenant of Ordination. This also fails to clarify the original intent of the Form of Subscription. The current Form of Subscription gives officebearers a direct and laid-out procedure that would maintain the unity of the church in the case that a divisive issue arose concerning a teaching with the confessions. Therefore, since the printing of these procedures lays out an appropriate and healthy way for an officebearer to communicate or deal with any difficulties he may have with the teachings of the confessions, we strongly believe these procedures must be included.

### III. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2008 to withhold action on the recommendations of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee and to appoint a new committee that will update the language (but not change the role or intent) of the Form of Subscription.

#### *Grounds:*

1. The recommendation of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee goes beyond the mandate of Synod 2005 and fails to accomplish its mandate of clarifying the Form of Subscription.
2. Clarifying the Form of Subscription can be done by updating the language of the document, while retaining its original intent and purpose.
3. The proposed Covenant of Ordination for Officebearers in the CRCNA implies that our confessions are merely faithful expressions of truth for one time and place, instead of the truth that is relevant for all times and places.
4. The proposed Covenant of Ordination gives *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* confessional status.

5. The proposed Covenant of Ordination fails to require officebearers to declare that they sincerely believe that the confessions “fully agree with the Word of God” or that they will defend the teachings of those confessions.
6. The proposed Covenant of Ordination for Officebearers fails to specify the procedures that officebearers should follow if they have difficulties with the doctrines of the confessions.
7. The unrevised Form of Subscription is still an appropriate and important standard for maintaining our unity and integrity as we bear witness to and uphold the truth of God’s Word in the twenty-first century.

Classis Minnkota  
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

### **Overture 23: Defer Deliberations and Decisions on the Proposed Covenant of Ordination for Officebearers in the CRCNA to Synod 2009**

Classis Lake Superior overtures synod to defer its deliberations and decisions on the proposed Covenant of Ordination for Office Bearers in the CRCNA to Synod 2009.

*Grounds:*

1. Churches and classes within our denomination have not been given the opportunity to study the final draft of the proposed Covenant of Ordination before it is presented to Synod 2008. The Rules for Synodical Procedure for the CRCNA state as follows:

No study reports or recommendations from boards or standing committees which affect doctrinal or ethical statements or Church Order provisions received by the executive director after September 15 or overtures received after March 15 shall be considered by synod, with the exception of overtures which deal with matters relevant to reports found in the printed *Agenda*. Any other overture or study report shall be considered only by special decision of synod on the basis of most weighty grounds.

(The Rules for Synodical Procedure for the CRCNA, section V, B, 8)

2. The revision of our historic Form of Subscription is a weighty matter. Thus, it is especially important that due process be followed and that churches and classes have ample time to study the final draft of the proposed Covenant of Ordination and engage fully in the deliberative process, should they so choose.

Classis Lake Superior  
Steven A. Zwart, stated clerk

## Communication 1: Classis Northcentral Iowa

At its March 2008 meeting, Classis Northcentral Iowa deliberated on the report from the Form of Subscription Revision Committee that very recently arrived. Ultimately we adopted an overture that requests synod to reject the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers unless there are some significant changes in it. That overture is included in the *Agenda for Synod 2008*.

While classis was deliberating on the above overture, it also considered a proposed Form of Subscription that was brought to classis by one of our pastors (our thanks to Dr. Tom Niehof for his contribution). This form of subscription is a freshly written document, rather than being a reaction to the document from the synodical committee. Although classis ultimately adopted the overture, classis believes that this document has sufficient merit and has decided to send it on to synod as a communication. This document has a number of merits: clarity of English, explicit mention of the ecumenical creeds, and a clear flow of thought. We judge that if a Form of Subscription like this were adopted we would not need an alternate Form of Subscription for communities in which English is the second language.

The document, named as follows, is printed below.

### Affirmation of Faith for Officebearers in the CRC in North America

We sign this document to affirm our acceptance of the historic Christian faith, taught in the Scriptures, defined in the early creeds, and further elaborated in the Reformed confessions.

We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God, inspired and authoritative, containing all things necessary for us to know for faith and life. We believe without doubt all things contained in them. We hold them above all human writings, as the confessions themselves teach us to do.

We affirm the early Christian creeds, that is, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, as foundational definitions of the Christian faith. In affirming these creeds we recognize our link to the earliest followers of Christ. We also recognize our common faith with the followers of Christ in other churches around the world who affirm historic Christianity. In affirming these creeds we distinguish ourselves from other religions and from various heresies.

We affirm the Reformed confessions as further elaborations of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We accept the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort as reliable statements of the Reformed faith,



which we embrace. In affirming these confessions we distinguish ourselves from other branches of the body of Christ and declare what we hold to be the most faithful understanding of Holy Scripture.

We promise to teach and preach the doctrines of Holy Scripture in line with the understanding of them taught in the above-mentioned creeds and confessions.

Should we at any point question the teachings of the creeds or of the confessions, we promise that we will alert our consistory, classis, or synod to those questions, and we rest in the judgment which those bodies shall reach.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Following are comments on the Affirmation of Faith for Officebearers in the CRC in North America:

1. Classis Northcentral Iowa has much appreciation for the work of the synodical committee, particularly their careful survey of the history of the Form of Subscription and synodical reflections on it.
2. We heartily agree with the committee that it is time for a newly written Form of Subscription. The historic Form of Subscription was originally written in Dutch, translated into Latin, then translated back into Dutch from the Latin, then translated from that Dutch into archaic and awkward English (see Donald Sinnema CTJ 42:2, pp. 278-79). No amount of fine-tuning is going to make that a readable document in English.
3. Unfortunately, the synodical committee has not quite shaken the convoluted language and thought flow of the historic Form of Subscription. For example, “the witness of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the above documents has become irreconcilable to the Holy Scriptures” is not clear and natural English.
4. If we have a clear and well-written Form of Subscription, we will not need an alternate Form of Subscription for communities in which English is a second language.
5. The Affirmation of Faith makes clear the flow of doctrinal authority, that of Holy Scripture being original, that of the creeds and confessions being derived. Thus the Affirmation of Faith begins with Scripture and ends with Scripture, and the level of assent to Scripture is higher than the level of assent to the creeds and confessions.
6. The Affirmation of Faith explicitly names the ecumenical creeds instead of allowing them to be affirmed by implication when one affirms the Belgic Confession. This explicit affirmation of the creeds honors the early church and is important in recognizing our ties to fellow believers in other Christian churches around the world.
7. The Affirmation of Faith does not mention the Contemporary Testimony, the Barmen Declaration, nor the Belhar Confession. Those documents are important, and we gratefully use them in preaching and teaching, but they have no place in a Form of Subscription that might last another four



hundred years. The fact that the Contemporary Testimony is currently undergoing an extensive re-write illustrates this point. The creeds are sufficient to define the Christian faith, and the historic confessions are sufficient to distinguish the Reformed faith from other expressions of Christianity. That is sufficient for a Form of Subscription.

8. There is some concern about the time-bound nature of creeds and confessions. We freely acknowledge that the creeds and confessions were timely responses to the issues of the day. So were most, if not all, of Paul's letters. Being timely does not rule out the possibility of being timeless. Scripture is true at all times and in all places. To the extent that the creeds and confessions succeed in capturing the truths of Scripture, their teaching is also true in all times and places. Whatever is not true in them needs to be amended by the processes already in place.

Classis Northcentral Iowa  
Thomas J. Vos, stated clerk

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### **Communication 2: Classis Minnkota**

Classis Minnkota sends delegates to Synod 2008 this year under protest because it believes that synod's new position permitting women to be delegated to synod contradicts the earlier decisions of Synod 1994 (opposing women's ordination) and Synod 1995 (holding both positions valid), and that it places classes in the awkward position of being forced to send delegates to synod with a strained conscience.

Classis Minnkota  
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

1. Mr. M. Boonstra