

transforming lives and communities worldwide

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2013



Christian
Reformed
Church

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2013



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Church

June 7-14, 2013
Covenant Fine Arts Center
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Synod 2013 begins its sessions on Friday, June 7, at 8:30 a.m. in the Covenant Fine Arts Center Auditorium at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Roosevelt Park Community CRC in Grand Rapids will serve as the convening church. The pastor of the convening church, Reverend Reginald Smith, will serve as the president pro-tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. Rev. Smith will also deliver the message at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise that will be held Sunday, June 9, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. at Roosevelt Park Community CRC, 811 Chicago Drive SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

All delegates and advisers to synod are encouraged to take time to listen to the audio orientation for synod, accessed on the private delegate site. There will be a reception for synod advisers and first-time delegates on Thursday, June 6, at 7:00 p.m. Opportunity will be given to be introduced to denominational staff, agency and ministry directors, and the college and seminary presidents.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 2 and 9. 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” (Eph. 4:3) as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

Joel R. Boot
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2013. Whether you are a returning delegate or 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 at 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 contact the synodical services office if you need information or have any questions before arriving by writing drecker@crcna.org or calling 800-272-5125 or 616-224-0827.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2013 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 recorded. 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 [video recording] 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 2013:

Thursday orientation

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Orientation for ethnic advisers, faculty advisers,
and young adult representatives

7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Reception for first-time delegates and synod advisers

7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Orientation for chairs and reporters, and for alternate
chairs and reporters of advisory committees

Opening Friday

8:30 - 11:00 a.m.

Opening session of synod

Election of officers

Finalization of committee assignments

11:15 - 12:15 p.m.

Advisory committees meet for introductions

12:15 - 1:15 p.m.

Lunch

12:15 p.m.

Orientation for officers of synod

1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Advisory committee meetings

3:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Advisory committee meetings

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Advisory committee meetings

Saturday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.

Opening worship

8:45 - 9:15 a.m.

Brief plenary session

9:30 - 11:45 a.m.

Advisory committee meetings

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:15 - 5:00 p.m.

Advisory committee meetings

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Tentative plenary session

Sunday

10:00 a.m.

Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise

Monday – Thursday

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

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*

*Synod will adjourn no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday.

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2013

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Victor Young Ko Arthur L. Verboon	Ministers William D. Nieuwenhuis Richard J. deLange
Elders	Wayne H. Bouwman Rick P. VanManen	Elders Ron J. De Leeuw Helen M. Doef
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	Paul W. Verhoef Curtis D. Korver	Ministers J. Cameron Fraser Tony Maan
Elders	Calvin Offereins Marvin Vandervalk	Elders _____ _____
Arizona		
Ministers	Jeffrey A. Dykema Jose Antonio Lara	Ministers Jonathan Gerstner Derek Van Dalen
Elders	Jose Rayas David A Reynolds	Elders Eric Cepin _____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Christopher A. Fluit Brent A. Pennings	Ministers Nicholas W. Monsma Derek M. Zeyl
Elders	Walter Bruinsma William Hanchett	Elders _____ _____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Johannes Schouten David A. Salverda	Ministers Martin Vellekoop Henry Jonker
Elders	Aaltje van Grootheest Peter C. Van Ooyen	Elders John Sneepe John Vande Woude
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Bert Slofstra William C. Veenstra	Ministers Thomas W. Bomhof Michael J. VanderKwaak
Elders	Ruth W. Umran William L. Tinsley	Elders Fred A. Meyerink John Te Brinke
California South		
Ministers	William Verhoef Cornelius Pool	Ministers John H. Caicedo Rick Kim
Elders	John Jansen Joel Verhoef	Elders LeeVale Butler Dirk Jasperse
Central California		
Ministers	Douglas J. Bouws Bruce A. Persenaire	Ministers Lloyd S. Wicker Kenneth D. Boonstra
Elders	Jay A. Sankey Titus E. Davis	Elders Adrian Van Houten _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Central Plains		
Ministers	Gary W. Brouwers Sheldon Starkenburg	Ministers Matthew C. McClure Gary Hanson
Elders	James Warden Wen-Yau Hseih	Elders Lee Veldhuizen
Chatham		
Ministers	William T. Koopmans Norman J. Visser	Ministers Eric Groot-Nibbelink Joshua C. Tuininga
Elders	Calvin P. Davies Peter Weening	Elders Frank Beute
Chicago South		
Ministers	Mark D. Timmer Tim S. Bossenbroek	Ministers Ronald D. Vanderwell D.A. Crushshon, Sr.
Elders	Dorothy J. Wassenaar Michael J. Brinks	Elders Alice Wisse Rebecca Nicholes
Columbia		
Ministers	William S. Wilton Perry J. Tinklenberg	Ministers Daniel R. Wolters Jelmer P. Groenewold
Elders	Harry Visser Michael Gulotta	Elders Walt Wierenga
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Daniel G. Brown Chad M. Vandervalk	Ministers Pieter A. Heerema Clarence H. Witten
Elders	Jack Van Starkenburg Gladys Baart	Elders Ronald Hosmar James Kooistra
Georgetown		
Ministers	David E. Den Haan David L. Jolman	Ministers Mark D. Bennink Joshua S. Van Drunen
Elders	Bernard R. Winkle Donald C. Veltman	Elders John Van Abbema
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	Emmett A. Harrison Rebecca Jordan Heys	Ministers Sam Lee David H. Beelen
Elders	George N. Monsma, Jr. Rosemary Vroon	Elders Sheryl Mulder Ralph Honderd
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Neil P. Jasperse Sean M. Baker	Ministers Shaun M. Furniss James D. Alblas
Elders	Jay Tans Jerry L. Elenbaas	Elders Noah J.K. Kruis
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Reginald Smith William J. Renkema	Ministers Michael W. Hoogeboom Donald J. Klop
Elders	Amy R. Schenkel Jolene M. DeHeer	Elders Arnold Koster
Grandville		
Ministers	Douglas R. Fauble Kent A. Rottman	Ministers Timothy A. Kuperus M. Dale Fopma
Elders	Gerrit L. DenHartog James Heethuis	Elders John Bredeweg

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Daniel J. Brink Charles C. Oh	Ministers Fernando Valencia Sidney Sybenga
Elders	David Jeltema Thomas H. Byma	Elders Melvin O. Jackson Ryan Ver Wys
Hackensack		
Ministers	Peter B. Armstrong Hernan Zapata-Thomack	Ministers Gary Roest Sheila E. Holmes
Elders	Karen Walker Steven Meyer	Elders Anton Brown
Hamilton		
Ministers	Kevin P. DeRaaf Henry P. Kranenburg	Ministers Jeffrey P. Janssen Christopher J. Schoon
Elders	Jacob Ellens George Elzinga	Elders Dick L. Kranendonk Jan G. Disselkoen
Heartland		
Ministers	John W. Van Der Heide Mark A. Vande Zande	Ministers Norlyn J. Van Beek Sam Keyzer
Elders	Loren J. Veldhuizen John J. Kooiker	Elders Lyle W. Myers LeRoy TenNapel
Holland		
Ministers	Gary L. Luurtsema Steve J. Dozeman	Ministers Keith M. Doornbos Chad M. Steenwyk
Elders	Fred Mireles Thomas Waalkes	Elders Kent VanTil Wayne Tjarks
Hudson		
Ministers	Joseph C. Byun Mary B. Stegink	Ministers Kenneth R. Bieber Albert Sideco
Elders	Peter Hagedoorn Natalie S. Beattie	Elders Bruce E. Gallagher Gerald Bandstra
Huron		
Ministers	David A. Tigchelaar Andrew J. Vis	Ministers Darren C. Roorda Vicki Verhulst Cok
Elders	Lenard Bakelaar Amanda Bakale	Elders Sidney Bruinsma Hank Van Donkersgoed
Iakota		
Ministers	Clifford Hoekstra David J. Prince	Ministers Calvin R. Hoogendoorn Eric B. Verhulst
Elders	Mick E. Vanden Bosch Ron J. De Weerd	Elders Karl Kaemingk
Illiana		
Ministers	Ildefonso Torres Jeffrey R. Bulthuis	Ministers Joel W. Zuidema Kris J. Vos
Elders	Paul J. Epley Richard L. Vandenberg	Elders Bernard Smit Marc V. Zumhagen
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Philip D. Kok Benjamin M. Hulst	Ministers Daniel S. Sarkipato Greg P. Timmer
Elders	George VanderWey John H. Slenk	Elders Randall J. Bouman

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Kory L. Plockmeyer Christian Y. Oh	Ministers Jung Un Park Adrian Eising
Elders	Grace J. Kreulen Bruce W. Holleboom	Elders Violetta Ann Diamond Theo Verbeek
Lake Superior		
Ministers	Archie L. VanderHart H. John Vanderburgh	Ministers Donald G. Draayer Cody L. Statema
Elders	Casey T. Soerens Bonnie B. Smith	Elders Leo Visser _____
Minnkota		
Ministers	Timothy J. Ouwinga Joseph Vanden Akker	Ministers Raidel León Martinez Timothy J. Brown
Elders	Rick A. Fey Rod J. Spronk	Elders Eldon Bonnema _____
Muskegon		
Ministers	Ronald G. Baker Drew K. Sweetman	Ministers Bruce T. Ballast Benjamin M. Oliveira
Elders	Susanne Jordan Dee Ann Hordyk	Elders Stephen J. Marotti _____
Niagara		
Ministers	Greg A. Fluit Benjamin J. Ponsen	Ministers Ryan W. Braam Steven J. deBoer
Elders	Karen M. Gerritsma Louis den Bak	Elders Bram Wiersma George deRoo
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Steven L. Shulz Michael L. Bentley	Ministers Thomas J. Niehof Thomas J. Vos
Elders	Daniel N. Lindley Arlie Olsen	Elders _____ _____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	Mark W. van Stee Phillip Stel	Ministers Fred A. De Jong Timothy H. Douma
Elders	John Bakker, Sr. Alan Bilthouse	Elders Andy Voss _____
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Steve J. Van Noort Alex D. Snider	Ministers Steven J. Datema Brian D. Seifert
Elders	Ruby N. Meekhof _____	Elders _____ _____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Jason J. Jun Jonathan J. Kim	Ministers O Seog Seo Sung Jae Park
Elders	Kang Won Kim Young Ryul Ki	Elders Peter N. Ryu Joshua Sung Ho Jung
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Peter R. Byma Rob W. Jansons	Ministers John C. Knoester Mark A. Van Haitsma
Elders	John Orange Linda Ackerman	Elders Robert E. Matter Paul DeKoekkoek

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Shawn R. Brix Keith D. Buist	Ministers Nathan Kuperus Steven L. Kooy
Elders	Hans Vink Sid Vander Wilp	Elders Ewoud DeLange
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Stanley Jim John J. Greydanus	Ministers Bobby L. Boyd William J. Kempkes
Elders	Linda M. Hekman Randy L. Freeland	Elders B.J. Shabala Timothy J. Bruinius
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	Michael S. Johnson Tom D. Draayer	Ministers Allen Klein Deters John Terpstra
Elders	Michael Bomgaars Richard Katte	Elders Andrew Nichols Robert W. Bandstra
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Randall J. Dieleman Juan Pablo Sanchez	Ministers Stanley J. Workman Thomas R. Dykstra
Elders	Juan Sierra Jerry Antoon	Elders Sandy Wagner
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Rodolfo Galindo David J. Bosscher	Ministers Paul R. De Vries Roger Scott Greenway
Elders	Henry E. DeVries II Robert Reitsma	Elders Phyllis J. Moes
Toronto		
Ministers	Hendrik P. Bruinsma John H. Bouwers	Ministers Richard A. Bodini Nathaniel E. Van Denend
Elders	Joseph W. Bowman Theody Corton	Elders John Van Loenen
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Larry L. Meyer Kenneth Prol	Ministers Mark J. Pluimer Daniel J. Roeda
Elders	Paul M. Boersma Larry Gunnink	Elders Calvin DeWitt
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Brian D. Tebben George N. DenOudsten	Ministers Timothy B. Toeset
Elders	George Den Hartigh Clifton G. Sanders	Elders
Zeeland		
Ministers	Timothy Howerzyl John C. Klompier	Ministers Vern D. Swieringa Aaron J. Greydanus
Elders	Michael J. Miedema Stanley Zemaitis	Elders Gary De Haan

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 2012 and Synod 2013.

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 2012 (September 2012 and February 2013) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2013. 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 binational 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 Rev. Kenneth A. Baker (Region 10), Mr. Mark Charles (member-at-large), Rev. Peter J. DeVries (Region 5), Ms. Joan Flikkema (Region 11), Dr. R. Scott Greenway (Region 11), Rev. Sheila E. Holmes (Region 12), Rev. Christian Y. Oh (member-at-large), Mr. Kyu Paek (Region 6), Mr. Peter Szto (member-at-large), Rev. Angela Taylor Perry (Region 10), Rev. John Terpstra (Region 7), Dr. Steven Timmermans (Region 9), Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven (Region 8), Mr. Chris Van Spronsen (Region 11), and Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen (Region 8).

The members of the Board from Canada are Mr. Wybe Bylsma (Quinte), Mrs. Elaine Dee (member-at-large), Mr. Bruce Dykstra (member-at-large), Rev. Harold de Jong (Lake Superior), Rev. Dale Melenberg (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Mrs. Grace Miedema (Chatham), Mr. Peter Noteboom (Toronto), Rev. Darren Roorda (Huron), Ms. Gavriel Tran (B.C. South-East), Ms. Katherine M. Vandergrift (Eastern Canada), Rev. Trevor Vanderveen (B.C. North-West), Rev. William C. Veenstra (member-at-large), Mr. Michael Wevers (Alberta North), and Mr. Bert Witvoet (Niagara). One position (Classis Hamilton) is presently vacant.

The executive director (Rev. Joel R. Boot) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

Following are the officers of the Board and respective corporations for the 2012-2013 term:

1. Board officers: Rev. J. Terpstra, president; Ms. K.M. Vandergrift, vice president; Rev. J.R. Boot, secretary; Rev. S.E. Holmes, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers
 - a. CRCNA-Canada Corporation: Ms. K.M. Vandergrift, president; Rev. W.C. Veenstra, vice president; Mrs. G. Miedema, secretary.
 - b. CRCNA-Michigan Corporation: Rev. J. Terpstra, president; Rev. S.E. Holmes, vice president; Rev. J.R. Boot, secretary; Rev. R.S. Greenway, vice-all.
3. Executive Committee: Rev. R.S. Greenway; Rev. S.E. Holmes; Mrs. G. Miedema; Rev. J. Terpstra, chair; Ms. K.M. Vandergrift; and Rev. W.C. Veenstra. Rev. J.R. Boot serves ex officio.

C. Current executive staff functions

Upon the appointment of Rev. Joel R. Boot as executive director in 2011, special arrangements were made in consultation with the executive committee of the Board of Trustees to quickly respond to the organizational need at that time. Dr. Peter Borgdorff was invited to serve as the deputy executive director for a term concurrent with the term of Rev. Boot and continues to serve the denomination in this role until a new executive director is appointed. While the position title "deputy executive director" is a new designation, it is meant to reflect that the functions of leadership are shared as needed. The responsibilities that consume most of the time and energies of these two positions include relating to the agencies and ministries of the denomination,

ecumenical relations, assisting synodical committees, providing general oversight of the denominational offices, and relating to the myriad of activities that involve classes and congregations. Rev. Boot and Dr. Borgdorff work in collaboration with other agency and denominational staff, and collectively this group of denominational appointees serves the church as a whole.

D. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Board reports the following salaries for senior denominational services staff directly employed by the Board of Trustees:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
20	1	2nd
19	2	4th
18	1	Currently vacant
17	3	2nd and 3rd

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

The Christian Reformed Church in North America
2012-2013 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$118,749	\$148,437	\$178,124			
19	\$107,055	\$133,818	\$160,582			
18	\$95,417	\$119,272	\$143,126	\$105,330	\$131,663	\$157,995
17	\$85,639	\$107,048	\$128,458	\$91,518	\$114,398	\$137,277
16	\$77,080	\$96,351	\$115,621	\$80,088	\$100,111	\$120,133
15	\$69,875	\$87,344	\$104,812	\$70,547	\$88,184	\$105,821
14	\$61,049	\$76,311	\$91,573	\$62,218	\$77,772	\$93,327
13	\$53,669	\$67,086	\$80,503	\$55,524	\$69,405	\$83,286

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Executive director of the CRCNA search

Upon the recommendation of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture and at the instruction of Synod 2012, the Board of Trustees appointed an Executive Director Search Committee with the mandate to present a candidate to the Board of Trustees, and subsequently to be presented for interview and approval by Synod 2013. The following were named to the committee:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Dr. Mary Buteyn | Mr. Loren Veldhuizen, chair |
| Rev. Sheila E. Holmes | Mr. Colin Watson |
| Mr. Peter Meerveld | Ms. Karen Wilk |
| Rev. Paul VanderKlay | Rev. Joel R. Boot, adviser |
| Mr. Ben Vandezande | Dr. Anthony Diekema, consultant |
| Rev. William C. Veenstra | Ms. Dee Recker, staff |

The committee met face-to-face in September 2012 and February 2013 and held several conference-call meetings in the interim. First-round

interviews are scheduled for March, followed by second interviews in April with the goal of presenting a single nominee to the May meeting of the BOT.

2. Senior leadership transition

The Board received and adopted, upon the endorsement of the BOT executive committee, a succession and transition plan presented by a task force appointed by the BOT executive committee. The Board approved extending the employment of Rev. Joel R. Boot and Dr. Peter Borgdorff up to June 30, 2014, and asks that they serve as deputies in supporting roles to the new Executive Director (ED), with the amount of time and the length of service within that year to be determined by the BOT executive committee in consultation with the newly appointed ED. The grounds adopted by the Board as basis for this decision are

Grounds:

- a. This plan will help provide a smooth transition of leadership within the denomination.
- b. This plan will allow the new ED time to adjust to his or her new position.
- c. We have certainly been blessed by the current ED and deputy ED relationship as it provides structure and accountability but also allows for flexibility when needed. We would like to provide that for our next ED.
- d. This plan will ensure continuity to the many existing task forces, committees, and initiatives our current ED and deputy ED serve on and, in many cases, chair.
- e. These two interim deputy salaries would be offset because the CRCNA currently has two vacant senior leadership level positions (Director of Advancement and the Director of Denominational Ministries).

3. Interim appointments

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

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Grandville	Rev. Douglas R. Fauble		2015(1)
	Greater Los Angeles Lake Superior		Rev. Gary M. Stevens Rev. Henry G. Gunnink	

4. 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, some classes have adopted a decision to declare that women officebearers may not be delegated to

classis. A list of these classes may be obtained by contacting the office of the executive director.

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 Board recommends the following slates of nominees from various geographic regions for election to a first term:

Region 7

Mr. David De Ridder is a commissioned pastor serving as the minister of congregational life at Third CRC in Denver, Colorado. He has served on the Dordt College Board and on the classical interim committee of Classis Rocky Mountain. Mr. De Ridder also provides pastoral counseling in Denver. He has served on council for several churches as an elder and is currently serving as elder at Third CRC.

Mrs. Sharon Jim is a member of Fort Wingate CRC in Fort Wingate, New Mexico. Mrs. Jim has completed the three-year Leadership Development Network education of Classis Red Mesa and is licensed to exhort in the classis. She has served her church as an elder, deacon, and treasurer of council. She has also served as an ethnic adviser to synod. Currently, Mrs. Jim is serving on the Rehoboth Cemetery Association and works at Rehoboth Christian School as the elementary and middle school secretary.

Region 8

Rev. Randall Raak is a minister at Bethel CRC in Edgerton, Minnesota. Rev. Raak graduated from Calvin College with a B.S. in accounting and went on to earn his C.P.A. license. In business, he served as a chief financial officer, human resources director, small business owner, and executive search consultant. Rev. Raak received an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2004 and a Church Redevelopment Certification in 2009. He has served his classis as stated clerk, church visitor, and in youth ministry and outreach positions. Rev. Raak has served on church council as pastor, deacon, and evangelist. He currently serves on the classical Home Missions and leadership development committees as well as on the board of directors for Pioneer Surgical Technology.

Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn serves as the senior pastor at First CRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He holds an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and a D.Min. from Covenant Theological Seminary. Rev. Hoogendoorn has served on the boards of Calvin Theological Seminary and Dordt College. He has served on his local church council since he became ordained, as well as on a number of classical committees.

Classis Hamilton

Mr. Garry Sytsma is a member of Ebenezer CRC in Jarvis, Ontario, and has served his church as elder, treasurer, and East African mission advocate. Mr. Sytsma is a graduate of the four-year Advanced Agricultural Leadership Course. He has served on several boards, including the boards of Hald-Nor Credit Union, Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Federal Farm Debt Review, World-wide Christian Schools Canada, Long Point Region Conservation Authority, Parkview Meadows, Hamilton District Christian High School, Ontario Agriculture Human Resources Council, Ontario Agricultural Labour Board, and Bible League of Canada. Mr. Sytsma currently serves on the boards of Shalom Manor (long-term care facility) and the Bible League of Canada, as well as on the Back to God Ministries International advancement board.

Mr. Dick L. Kranendonk is a member of Ancaster (Ont.) CRC and has served his church as elder and chair of council. He has a B.A. in psychology as well as a master of library and information science degree (Ed.D. with dissertation on finance and administration). He is retired from serving as CEO of the Bible League of Canada. Mr. Kranendonk has served as director of Classis Hamilton and on the boards of Christian Schools International, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities, Christian Stewardship Services, and Christian Horizons. He currently serves on the classical interim committee, classis ministry team, the Hald-Nor Credit Union board, the Christian Economic Assistance Foundation, and the OACS investment committee.

The Board recommends the following nominees from various classes or geographic regions for election (ratification) to a second term: Rev. Peter De Vries (Region 5), Rev. R. Scott Greenway (Region 11), Mr. Peter Noteboom (Toronto), Rev. Angela Taylor Perry (Region 10), and Ms. Katherine M. Vandergrift (Eastern Canada).

b. At-large members

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also appointed directly by synod and exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

The Board recommends the following at-large nominees for election (ratification) to a second term: Rev. Christian Y. Oh (U.S. at-large) and Rev. William C. Veenstra (Canada at-large).

6. Annual report on gender and ethnic diversity on denominational boards

We are pleased to report that the number of women on denominational boards showed an increase over the past year after a decline two years in a row. In addition, there is continued progress in the makeup of ethnic diversity in board composition. There are presently 205 board members serving on eight denominational boards. Of the 205 board members combined, 56 (27.3%) are women and 37 (18%) are persons of color. The 2012-2013 board term shows an *increase* of 1 woman and an *increase* of 7 persons of color on the boards over the previous year.

7. Annual report on denominational efforts to address ethnic diversity and racial justice

Synod 2010 requested that the BOT report to synod each year on the status of denominational efforts to address ethnic diversity and racial justice. In regard to further diversity efforts throughout the denomination, the information at this point is almost exclusively anecdotal. The Office of Race Relations has informed the ED of six or seven classes that have active race relations teams. The director of synodical services regularly encourages stated clerks and agency boards to seek ethnic diversity in nominating people to serve. Such encouragement, however, is entirely without enforcement authority since, within the boundaries of our polity, nominations are within the prerogative of the classes and boards involved.

8. Ethnic advisers to synod

The policy for the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod 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 to synod 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."

At this writing the number of ethnic minority delegates appointed to Synod 2013 by classes is 21. To round out that number to reach twenty-five, the BOT has appointed the following persons at this time to serve as ethnic advisers to synod on an as-needed basis (* indicates service as an ethnic adviser in 2012):

Mr. John Caicedo
Ms. Bev De Vries

Rev. Jimmy Han
*Ms. Sue Silversmith

9. Young adult representatives to synod

In an effort to engage youth and young adults (18-26 year olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination and to help raise up leadership within the church from among our young adults, the delegates to Synod 2013 will be complemented by participation of young adult representatives to the deliberations of synod. These individuals bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering input on matters that arise in plenary. The BOT has appointed the following persons to serve as young adult representatives to Synod 2013 (* indicates service as a young adult representative in 2012):

Mr. Nicholas Chuba
Ms. Laura de Jong
Mr. Chadd Huizenga
*Mr. Cedric Parcels

Mr. Kyle Schaap
Ms. Nicole Scholten
Ms. Nicole Veenkamp

The Board adopted a goal in September 2012 of striving for 25 percent ethnic representation in the appointment of young adult representatives to synod. The churches are encouraged to keep this in mind and make a

conscious effort to nominate ethnic minority young adults when solicitations are sent out annually in the fall.

10. Role of advisers to synod

The Board of Trustees asked that the role of advisers to synod be clarified for the benefit of both appointed advisers and synod. A task force brought forward a study of the various adviser roles, including an extensive outline of the history of synod advisers over the years, as well as recommendations to the Board of Trustees for its consideration. The BOT forwards the Role of Advisers to Synod report (Appendix A) and recommends its adoption.

11. 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 2013:

- Calvin College
- Christian Reformed World Missions
- CRC Specialized Ministries

12. Convening church of Synod 2014

The Board recommends that synod accept the invitation of First CRC, Pella, Iowa, with participation of Faith CRC, to be the convening church of Synod 2014. Synod 2012 accepted the invitation of the Reformed Church in America to meet simultaneously with the RCA General Synod in Pella in June 2014.

13. Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity

Following the adoption of the Covenant for Officebearers by Synod 2012, the timing seemed appropriate to review and recommend an update to the current Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity found at the end of the Rules for Synodical Procedure. All delegates to synod are asked to rise to show their agreement with this declaration upon the convening of synod. To the best of our knowledge, this form has never been updated. The Board of Trustees recommends that synod adopt the proposed Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America as found in Appendix B.

14. Confidentiality of documents presented at synod

Presently, adopted guidelines are not in place with regard to use of names, particularly those of victim(s), within appeals and confidential documents before synod. In the best interests of synod and the victims involved in cases reviewed, the BOT recommends that synod adopt the following proposed changes to sections within the Rules for Synodical Procedure as indicated:

- a. That the following addition be made to section II, C, 3 (addition in italics):

3. The record shall not contain:

- a. Any rejected motion except when it is a main motion;
- b. Any motion that is withdrawn;
- c. *Any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.*

- b. That the following addition be made to section V, B:

New point #11. Confidential materials

Nonprinted appeals, communications, or other materials legally before synod judged by the ED, in consultation with the Program Committee or Board of Trustees, to be confidential in nature, will be distributed only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned. Any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation will be removed from the document, and the matter will be dealt with by the advisory committee in executive session.

Note: The current #11 and #12 will be renumbered #12 and #13, respectively.

- c. That the following additions be made to sections VI, F, 4, b; and VI, F, 6, a, as indicated (additions in italics):

4, b. Recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee shall be presented to synod in writing, shall be accompanied with grounds, *shall omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation*, and shall be openly discussed in plenary sessions of synod. An executive or strict executive session of synod can be declared as per normal synodical rules.

6, a. The written report from the Judicial Code Committee to synod must set forth the significant facts as found by the Judicial Code Committee and adequate rationale for the committee's recommendation. This will generally require more than a brief statement of grounds for each recommendation. *The report shall not include disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.* The Judicial Code Committee must give copies of its report and recommendation to the parties or their representatives as promptly as possible.

The Board also asked that synod, upon adoption of the recommended changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure above, instruct the ED to update Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures Article 25 to reflect these changes.

15. 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 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 first term. It is recommended that synod reappoint Mr. Charles C. Adams and Dr. John Van Schepen to a second three-year term on the committee.

Mr. Bill Kort completed service on the Judicial Code Committee in 2012, and Mr. Christian Meyer is completing his second term in 2013. In addition, Mr. James Mutoigo has resigned from the committee. Therefore, the BOT asks that synod elect to a first term three persons out of the following four nominees for membership on the Judicial Code Committee:

Ms. Rita Buitendorp is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she has served as a deacon. She holds a J.D. from the Valparaiso University School of Law and a B.A. from Calvin College. She is presently employed as a career law clerk in the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan. Ms. Buitendorp has served on Programs Assisting Refugee Acculturation (PARA) as a volunteer, as a board member, and as board president. She is currently serving on the Grand Rapids Christian Schools board of trustees and as secretary of its executive committee.

Mr. John Knibbe is a member of River Park CRC in Calgary, Alberta, where he has served as council representative and chair of the diaconate and calling committees. He holds a J.D. and is employed as a lawyer. He has served on The King's University College board of directors and on the CRC Ministers' Pension Fund board of trustees. He is currently serving as a classis representative on the Diaconal Ministries of Canada and the classis advisory committee.

Mr. Ron Nightingale is a member of Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario, where he has served as an elder. Mr. Nightingale works as a lawyer at a private practice. He has previously served on the boards of Friendship Ministries Canada and the local Christian school, as well as on the McMaster University chaplaincy committee. Mr. Nightingale is currently serving the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and Bibles for Missions.

Mr. Joel D. Vos is a member of Friendship Community Church in Sergeant Bluff, Iowa (a church plant of Calvin CRC in Le Mars). He holds a J.D. from the University of Iowa Law School and a B.A. from Dordt College. Mr. Vos is presently employed as a partner at Heidman Law Firm, LLP. He has previously served his church on the leadership team (the church plant's equivalent of a council) since 2004 and is a leader of the praise and worship team.

16. Maranatha CRC and suspension of Rev. J. Visser.

Upon the recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee, Synod 2012 adopted the following:

2. That synod not sustain the appeal of Maranatha CRC regarding the application of special discipline against Pastor Visser; that Pastor Visser be suspended for at least 90 days from the office of minister of the Word; and that synod authorize the BOT, in the interim of synod, to reinstate Rev. Visser only after he satisfactorily sustains, under the oversight of the BOT and at the cost of the denomination, "an evaluation of readiness for ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal/emotional status" (Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a). Further, the BOT must be satisfied that the oversight called for in Recommendation 4 below is in place, particularly regarding issues of confidentiality.
4. That synod not sustain Maranatha's appeal regarding an independent accredited oversight of the Healing Ministry being obtained and direct council that it promptly contract for ongoing adequate independent accredited oversight of the Healing Ministry.

(Acts of Synod 2012, p. 739)

On January 4, 2013, the Board of Trustees voted to lift the suspension of Rev. John Visser and immediately released a public statement, included as Appendix C to this report.

17. Judicial code process

The Board of Trustees decided that, to assist the Judicial Code Committee in the future for complex cases, a review be conducted of the Judicial Code as found in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. A task force appointed by the Board will take into account the CRC-adopted abuse prevention and restorative justice statements and present a report to the BOT for consideration and for possible recommendation to Synod 2014.

18. Director of Canadian ministries

In August 2012, Rev. Bruce G. Adema resigned from his position as director of Canadian ministries. At that time, Mr. Ben Vandezande was appointed to serve as interim director of Canadian ministries with a special mandate that includes

- ensuring the continuity of existing ministries related to Canadian ministries.
- reviewing Canadian ministries, especially the role of the director of Canadian ministries, and preparing a report for the May 2013 meeting of the Board of Trustees with recommendations on how to move this role forward with greater clarity.

The denominational office in Canada includes some thirty-five staff persons who work for the Christian Reformed Church agencies and ministries in Canada. The Canadian ministries office and the director of Canadian ministries work to stimulate collaboration among these ministry staff as they serve the churches and the mission of the CRCNA in the Canadian context.

19. Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

Synod 2012 affirmed “the necessity for the CRC to examine, better understand, and respond to the ‘Doctrine of Discovery’ and related legal instruments—particularly in their origins, their historical effects, and their continuing effects on indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States.” Synod instructed the Board of Trustees to form a task force and provide a mandate, process, and time frame for study and response. The following group, appointed to serve on the task force, will “keep the church informed throughout its work” and “conclude its work with a summary report of its findings and, if appropriate, recommendations to the Board of Trustees and synod for further action” (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 806). A mandate was adopted by the Board in September 2012 (Appendix D), and the following persons were appointed to serve as members of the task force:

Ms. Carissa Bakker-Johnson
Mr. Mark Charles
Mr. Mike Hogeterp, chair
Mr. Steve Kabetu

Ms. Liz Kuipers
Mr. Harold Roscher
Ms. Susie Silversmith
Mr. Peter Vander Meulen

20. Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture

Within the *Agenda for Synod 2013* is the annual report of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture. Because the task force reports to synod through the BOT, the BOT is provided opportunity to comment on the report. Collaboration between the task force and the BOT is also enhanced in as much as two BOT members (Mrs. K.M. Vandergrift and Rev. R.S. Greenway) also serve as members of the task force. The task force, like all other synodical study committees, makes its recommendations to synod. Simultaneously, the BOT is a governing board to provide oversight to the management of the agencies and ministry offices. While at times the differing roles are confusing, there has been good cooperation and understanding between the task force and the BOT.

21. Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II (DLPG II)

The DLPG II is also presenting a report to Synod 2013. In reviewing the recommendations contained in the report, the BOT took particular note of the recommendation that a staff person be appointed for a two-year term. The BOT has requested the administration to address the financial implications involved in this recommendation and report back to the BOT in May. There is no provision in the current budget planning process for an additional expenditure of such proportions (\$500,000 per year for two years). The committee’s suggestion that such monies be taken from the budgets of all the agencies is, in the BOT’s judgment, untenable. The administration also expressed the concern that the proposed position would appear to have an authority over the agency boards and the classes that is not consistent with our governance structure. Finally, it seems that while the objective of gathering better information and greater encouragement for diversity is appropriate, the appointment of another administrative person is unlikely to be what is needed to achieve such an objective.

22. Leadership Exchange

In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the CRC, synod decided to approve a Leadership Institute, the purpose of which was to provide a concentrated and coordinated leadership training resource for leadership development at all levels of congregational and denominational life. The proposal for such an institute was altered to become the Leadership Exchange, which, different from an institute, shifted the focus to more of a peer-learning model of leadership development. After an almost three-year pilot, that project was suspended in January 2012, primarily because the Leadership Exchange Governing Board, with the concurrence of the BOT, determined that the envisioned objectives were not being achieved. In the meantime the need for leadership training has captured the attention of a variety of denominational ministry offices, both in the CRC and in the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The current objective is to do an assessment of various approaches being used and to explore whether a joint effort with the RCA may be the best way to proceed. Dr. Duane Kelderman has agreed to lead that assessment while discussions with the RCA are being further explored.

23. Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism

The year 2013 marks the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism—a confession of the Reformed tradition that has played a formative role in the life of the Christian Reformed Church. Because the catechism’s first question and answer, especially, captures for many a core tenet of our belief, the Board feels it is important to celebrate the catechism by recommending the following resolution for adoption by Synod 2013:

Resolution to Commemorate the 450th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America remembers that 2013 is the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism, and recommends that members, congregations, classes, agencies, educational institutions, and staff renew their study of its insights and contributions to the Christian life. Our “only comfort in life and in death” is that we are not our own, “but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to [our] faithful Savior, Jesus Christ” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 1).

As an expression of our unity in Christ and to commemorate our great appreciation for this gift to the Christian church, synod calls all Christian Reformed congregations to recite in unison Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 1 during the morning worship service on Sunday, September 15, 2013.

A communication has been sent to the RCA, inviting them to join in this commemoration.

24. Early involvement of CRC ministries when tensions develop in congregations

Synod 2012 instructed the BOT

to develop ways in which the Office of Pastor-Church Relations or others, such as church visitors and regional pastors, can become involved more quickly in situations where tensions are developing within a congregation. Experience suggests that early interaction provides a possibility of healthy resolution that becomes less likely after tensions have risen to a breaking point.

(Acts of Synod 2012, p. 755)

At its February 2013 meeting, the Board received and endorsed the report and proposals of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations as found in Appendix E in response to synod's request. The Board further instructed the ED to explore possible funding options for the proposal presented and to bring a report to the May meeting of the Board.

25. Review of Guidelines for Former Pastors and Congregations

Synod 2009 asked for a review of the Guidelines for Former Pastors and Congregations, adopted by that same synod, with recommendations for appropriate adjustments to Synod 2013. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations prepared an in-depth evaluation of this set of guidelines for review by the Board of Trustees. The Board wishes to communicate to synod its endorsement of the report.

26. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually, 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 ordinarily published near the beginning of each calendar year and reflects denominational and local-church information up to approximately August 31 of the calendar year preceding publication.

Among some of the statistics published in the *Yearbook* are the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation, 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 received from other CRCs through evangelism and from other denominations.

The core database that stores *Yearbook* data is used for many purposes, such as calculating ministry shares and pension assessments, mailing list requests, updating the list of churches on the CRC website, and handling requests for information that is not published in the *Yearbook*.

During the summer and fall of 2012, the data managed by the Office of Synodical Services and reflected in the *Yearbook* publication was migrated to a new core database system that will help us to

better serve the churches and members in the coming years. Because of this large undertaking and the time involved for managing transfer of data and developing a new survey format, plans for an online version of the *Yearbook* were postponed.

b. *Church Order and Its Supplements*

The updated *Church Order and Its Supplements 2012* booklet reflects the updates adopted by Synod 2012. The latest version, updated by the Office of Synodical Services, was made available to the churches in early fall 2012. The *Rules for Synodical Procedure* is published separately and is available only in electronic format on the Synodical Resources web page at www.crcna.org/SynodResources.

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. From time to time some decisions need to be made about which material properly belongs in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seems more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in Summer 2012 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting the decisions of Synod 2012. Anyone desiring to read a copy of this tool for the classes may download a copy from the stated clerk web page at www.crcna.org/StatedClerks.

B. *Program matters*

A large part of the Board of Trustees' work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of the reports of the agencies and this section of the BOT's report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in Appendix F to this Board of Trustees Report as well as in the *Agenda for Synod 2013—Financial and Business Supplement* that is distributed at synod. The final budget and the ministry share request will be presented to synod by way of synod's finance advisory committee.

The BOT provides denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries. Serving within the office of the ED are the deputy executive director (DED), the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of finance and administration (DFA), and the director of synodical services (DSS).

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC), convened by the executive director of the CRCNA, has responsibility for implementation of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church, the collaboration of the ministries, and the review of program matters. The membership of the MLC is made up of senior leadership, directors of agencies, presidents of the educational

institutions (or their designees), and others representative of their offices and function.

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

1. Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church

The Board of Trustees is mandated by synod to lead in developing and implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. The plan provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the management of the agencies; the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.

The Ministry Plan focuses on biblical and theological identity and the core values that unite us in ministry. The Appendix to the Ministry Plan, the Identity Statement, is available in booklet form titled "What It Means to Be Reformed" and is available through Faith Alive Christian Resources (www.faithaliveresources.org).

At its September meeting, after hearing a presentation by the consultants assisting with the review of the present plan, the BOT decided to encourage a "fundamental reframing" of the current plan. This process is under way—a task group, working under the direction of the ED, with the assistance of consultants from The Missional Network, is working to propose a new strategic direction for the denomination.

2. Faith Alive Christian Resources

As has been widely reported in recent months, Faith Alive Christian Resources has been facing a series of challenging issues. Primary among the difficulties is the changing market conditions for Faith Alive products and resources. While at one time most Christian Reformed congregations used Faith Alive materials for church school and other congregational curricula, that is no longer the case—and that trend has been perceptible for quite a long time. The consequence of this change is that the income stream is no longer sufficient to sustain Faith Alive as an agency of the CRC in its present form. Significant infusions of cash were needed to keep Faith Alive solvent through this fiscal year, but there is a substantial consensus that the current model is financially unsustainable. Several marketing strategies have been employed, but none were able to reverse the trend. That reality has led the Faith Alive leadership (both administrative and the Faith Alive board), as well as the denomination's administration (and the BOT), to come to the conclusion that a different alignment needs to be introduced. Because the agencies and ministry offices are interdependent entities, when one is affected by adverse circumstances, all (to some extent) are affected. Therefore, the following is a summary of correspondence that was circulated in February 2013, describing the approach that was developed in dealing not only with Faith Alive, but with the overall environment of denominational ministries.

This summary is intended to provide an orderly and comprehensive description of the current changes being anticipated (subject to several

pending approvals) in the denominational ministries realignment. The most descriptive word that governs what follows is the word *convergence*. The convergence of need, circumstance, urgency, and interest has arisen from a variety of sources.

The world of denominational publishing houses, as we have known for some time, has been turned upside down. A number of such houses have ceased operations, and Faith Alive has also been faced with a growing challenge. The conclusion has been reached that Faith Alive, as currently structured, cannot survive and will run out of operating cash within a few months, mainly due to a lack of sales in what previously was a reliable market. At the same time, a substantial customer base remains. Faith Alive performs important functions and provides valuable educational and other resources for the CRC and the RCA in addition to a number of other denominations. Therefore, serious consideration must be given to restructuring Faith Alive in such a way that these important contributions can be preserved while, at the same time, finding ways to reduce costs and become financially sustainable. It is believed that in order to achieve sustainability the critical functions Faith Alive performs, the projects that are in the planning phase, and the required personnel to maintain important functions must be identified and appropriately placed within other denominational structures. It is intended that by combining functions within other, perhaps realigned, offices, significant savings can be achieved. Every effort will be made to preserve the important parts of the present Faith Alive organization. It is also intended that the brand name "Faith Alive Christian Resources" and the corporate entity by the same name will be retained and be temporarily placed under the governance of the BOT.

The BOT, in responding to the circumstances at its February 2013 meeting, concurred that reorganization proceed as proposed with details to be reported to the BOT at the May 2013 meeting. However, only synod can dissolve an agency board, and therefore the BOT recommends, and the Faith Alive board concurs, that synod dissolve the Faith Alive board effective June 30, 2013. It is further recommended that the remaining functions of Faith Alive, including *The Banner*, be temporarily governed by the BOT. The temporary provision of this recommendation results because, as further alignments are considered and as the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture continues its consideration of denominational structure, it seems prudent to delay long-term proposals until a later time.

3. Faith formation and other ministries

Consistent with recent decisions of synod, a lot of attention has been given to the discussion of faith formation and especially to supporting congregations in that endeavor. The faith formation principle is deeply embedded in Reformed theology and, in recent years, the CRC has been giving renewed attention to its importance. What perhaps is "new" in the current discussion is the integrated way of thinking about faith formation and the role of the congregation in that process. Faith formation essentially involves all of the congregation's activities (e.g., Word and sacrament, discipling, teaching, leading, and serving). The denominational ministries need to become more responsive to the needs of faith communities

everywhere and to provide the resources that congregations need to serve God's people well. That is not congregationalism but rather "equipping the saints for ministry" in such a way that the kingdom of Christ is lived out in and among the fellowship of the church and the community in which a congregation serves. Fundamental to this emphasis is the engagement of congregations in the discussion about what resources are needed and the encouragement they need on their journey. To initiate this conversation in a more meaningful way, it is anticipated that an effort will be initiated for a pilot project (perhaps one hundred congregations) to be very intentional about faith formation at the congregational level. It is expected that this pilot will be for a two-year period beginning later this year.

At the same time, every effort will be made to collaborate with partner organizations (e.g., Dynamic Youth Ministries, Friendship Ministries, Partners Worldwide, Timothy Leadership Training Institute, and so on) to be part of this faith formation thrust.

Denominational ministry offices have at times been more inclined to decide what is needed by the congregation rather than being responsive to what congregations say is needed. There is a renewed emphasis on changing that paradigm. Presently the ministry services of the denomination are organized to support the (mandate) ministry of that particular office. That history has led to a "silo" type organizational behavior. Denominations in our current environment need to be reinvented and perhaps rediscover how to serve more effectively the congregations that sustain them. To achieve a more coordinated effort to serve effectively, the administration is proposing to align the critical functions that were part of Faith Alive with other offices in the denominational structure, realign the specialized ministries into a greater collaborative team effort, and develop a coordinated approach with the part of the Home Missions mandate dedicated to the revitalization of congregational life and missional renewal. At this time of writing, the details of the realignment are being discussed. It is expected that by the time the BOT meets in May, and synod convenes in June, a clearer picture will have emerged.

To date, Safe Church Ministry, Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Sustaining Congregational Excellence have already been realigned with Pastor-Church Relations. Disability Concerns is poised to join that team soon. Other realignments are under consideration.

4. CRC agency, institution, and specialized ministry reports

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports of the CRC ministries appear in the following pages of this *Agenda for Synod*.

These reports paint a picture of the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at home and around the world. As you read the material, we invite you to praise God for ministry opportunities.

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 2013—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 2014 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014), and the recommended ministry-share amount for the calendar year 2014. 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 World Renew (in lieu of ministry-share support), and a listing of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the BOT supplementary report due out in late May.

D. Christian Reformed Church Foundation

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation began in the early 1990s, when several Christian Reformed Church members and the CRCNA executive director of ministries began the Fellowship Fund to support uniquely denominational programs and needs. Synod 1996 approved a binational Christian Reformed Church Foundation, now a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization in the United States. Its counterpart is the tax-exempt registered charity Christian Reformed Church in North America–Canada Foundation.

Since the Foundation's inception, it has distributed funds received to various offices and agencies of the CRCNA or to closely affiliated organizations, including the Timothy Institute, Partners Worldwide, and CRC agencies such as Back to God Ministries International and Christian Reformed Home Missions.

The Foundation Board of Directors is committed to strengthening the ministries of the CRC. The Foundation seeks financial support for new ideas and programs that fall outside the mandates of the denominational agencies and are not funded through budgets of synod, classes, or agencies.

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation does not offer estate planning services but partners with Barnabas Foundation in the United States and with Christian Stewardship Services in Canada to help families make planned gifts and develop estate plans.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. John Terpstra, chair of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod grant all requests for privilege of the floor by the BOT, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2013.

C. That synod approve all requests for special offerings for the agencies, ministries, and educational institutions of the CRC that are contained within the reports to Synod 2013.

D. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board for synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies (II, A, 3), as well as to the agency and institution boards as needed.

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

F. That synod by way of the ballot reappoint to a second term members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 5).

G. That synod adopt the following recommendations contained in the Role of Advisers to Synod report (II, A, 10 and Appendix A):

1. That synod acknowledge the importance of advisers in the work of synod and affirm the intent to select all future faculty advisers from a pool of qualified personnel. In the case of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes. The primary criteria for the selection of all advisers shall be their area of knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod, or (in the case of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives) their valuable perspective in discussions of denominational matters and in the work of synod.
2. That synod adopt regulations that apply to the role of all advisers to synod:
 - a. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.
 - b. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.
 - c. Advisers shall normally have access only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned by the program committee. A request to speak to, or be present at, another advisory committee is to be processed through, and approval is at the discretion of, the chair and reporter of that advisory committee.
 - d. Advisers normally shall not participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session unless specifically requested or permitted to do so by the president of synod.
 - e. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committee for which the adviser serves, but advisers are to be reminded that their role is to serve the delegates of synod in their deliberation and that the adviser's remarks should be framed as such.
 - f. Advisers are not permitted to vote in committee or in plenary sessions of synod.
3. That synod approve the following classifications of advisers:
 - a. *Faculty advisers* shall normally be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary and, as needed, from among the faculty of Calvin College. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) The executive director shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary (or the administration of Calvin

College, as needed), select as many faculty members with particular expertise as are needed for that year.

- 2) The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the executive director of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members available to serve as advisors to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members. The same essential procedure shall be followed by the administration of Calvin College in the event that college faculty members are needed to serve as advisors to synod in a particular year.
 - 3) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - 4) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- b. *Ethnic advisers* are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven such ethnic minority nonvoting advisers may be appointed, subject to the selection rules as adopted by Synod 2005 (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, D). The number of seven (or proportion of) such persons shall be appointed as long as the total number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of ethnic minority advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of voting delegates from ethnic-minority origin exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of ethnic minority advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of ethnic minority advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three-year rolling average of diversity presence at synod.
- c. *Young adult representatives* are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Appointment of these representatives to synod is made according to the guidelines previously adopted by synod (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, E).
- d. *Staff consultants* are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the office of the executive director and designated by the executive director, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:
- 1) Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the executive director or his/her designee.
 - 2) When the executive director assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then normally a faculty adviser will not be assigned to the same advisory committee.

- 3) The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.
 - e. *Agency board representatives and presidents of the educational institutions* (normally the agency board presidents and the agency directors) shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.
 - f. *Board of Trustees of the CRCNA representation* shall consist of the chair of the BOT, one other member of the BOT Executive Committee, and the executive director of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees.
4. That synod instruct the executive director's office to update the Rules for Synodical Procedure regarding advisers to reflect these decisions, specifically replacing the responsibilities of advisers listed in sections III, D, 3 and III, E, 3, and any other sections affected, with these new regulations that apply to all advisers to synod.
- H. That synod accept the invitation of First CRC, Pella, Iowa, with participation of Faith CRC, as the convening church of Synod 2014 (II, A, 12).
- I. That synod adopt the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America as presented in Appendix B (II, A, 13).
- J. That synod adopt the following proposed changes to the sections identified within the Rules for Synodical Procedure (II, A, 14):
1. That the following addition be made to section II, C, 3 (addition in italics):
 3. The record shall not contain:
 - a. Any rejected motion except when it is a main motion;
 - b. Any motion that is withdrawn;
 - c. *Any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.*
 2. That the following addition be made to section V, B:

New point #11. Confidential materials

Nonprinted appeals, communications, or other materials legally before synod judged by the ED, in consultation with the Program Committee or Board of Trustees, to be confidential in nature, will be distributed only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned. Any disclosure of

names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation will be removed from the document, and the matter will be dealt with by the advisory committee in executive session.

Note: The current #11 and #12 will be renumbered #12 and #13, respectively.

3. That the following additions be made to sections VI, F, 4, b; and VI, F, 6, a, as indicated (additions in italics):
 - 4, b. Recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee shall be presented to synod in writing, shall be accompanied with grounds, *shall omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation, and shall* be openly discussed in plenary sessions of synod. An executive or strict executive session of synod can be declared as per normal synodical rules.
 - 6, a. The written report from the Judicial Code Committee to synod must set forth the significant facts as found by the Judicial Code Committee and adequate rationale for the committee's recommendation. This will generally require more than a brief statement of grounds for each recommendation. *The report shall not include disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.* The Judicial Code Committee must give copies of its report and recommendation to the parties or their representatives as promptly as possible.
4. That synod, upon adoption of the recommended changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure above, instruct the ED to update Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures Article 25 to reflect these changes.
- K. That synod by way of the ballot both elect and reappoint to a second term members for the Judicial Code Committee from the nominees presented (II, A, 15).
- L. That synod adopt the following resolution to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism (II, A, 23):

Resolution to Commemorate the 450th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America remembers that 2013 is the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism, and recommends that members, congregations, classes, agencies, educational institutions, and staff renew their study of its insights and contributions to the Christian life. Our "only comfort in life and in death" is that we are not our own, "but belong body and soul—in life and in death—to [our] faithful Savior, Jesus Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 1).

As an expression of our unity in Christ and to commemorate our great appreciation for this gift to the Christian church, synod calls

all Christian Reformed congregations to recite in unison Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 1 during the morning worship service on Sunday, September 15, 2013.

M. That synod approve the BOT's response to the Faith Alive situation and approve the dissolution of the Faith Alive board effective June 30, 2013 (II, B, 2).

N. That synod note the reorganization of the specialized ministries in support of the faith formation initiative (II, B, 3).

O. That synod consider the following recommendations from the Office of Disability Concerns:

1. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to adopt a church policy on disability and to appoint at least one person in the congregation to serve as a church disability advocate.

Grounds:

- a. Churches that have a policy on disability and a church disability advocate have both a framework and a person to help them comply with the synodical decision of 1993 that calls all portions of the CRC located in the United States and Canada to comply fully with the provisions and regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Subsequent to the decision of Synod 1993, federal and provincial governments in Canada have ratified the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that provides a standard for Canada.
- b. Church advocates can provide direction to pastors, elders, and deacons not only to make the church building, program, and communication accessible but also to find appropriate assistance for persons affected by disabilities.
- c. When the apostle Paul urged the churches of Corinth to take up an offering for the impoverished church in Jerusalem, he argued that "your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness" (2 Cor. 8:14, ESV). Churches that commit to a policy on disability will make their buildings, programs, and communication accessible for all members (including those with disabilities), so that "there may be fairness." In doing so, these churches proclaim that everybody belongs, and everybody has the opportunity to serve.
- d. Churches that have a church advocate and commit to a church policy on disability will be better able to provide assistance and prevent further harm for people who experience the often traumatic onset of disabilities.
- e. Churches that have a policy and advocate are more likely to take the necessary steps to take their churches beyond the minimum requirements of the law, and lead their communities in engaging people with disabilities.
- f. Our Lord's call to reach people with the gospel includes reaching the 20 percent of the population who have disabilities in addition to their family members and friends. Churches that seek to fulfill the

calls of our Lord in Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 14:13-14 will benefit greatly from committing to a policy and appointing an advocate.

2. That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Week from October 14-20, 2013.

Grounds:

- a. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities will remind God's people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).
- b. This date coincides with the denominational schedule for offerings, which assigns the third Sunday in October to Disability Concerns.
- c. The Bible calls God's people to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. In 1985, the CRC committed itself as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude "in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God's family." Although our Lord Jesus calls all of his people to ministry in his church, the church has not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully and sometimes has isolated them and their families.

- P. That synod consider the following recommendation from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations:

That Synod 2013 adopt the following revisions to Church Order Article 12-b (indicated by strikethrough and italic):

- b. A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions, ~~or~~ chaplaincy, *or specialized transitional ministry*; or (2) is appointed directly by synod; or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

Grounds:

1. It is not desirable to have an interim minister of the Word called by each church that he or she serves for a relatively short period of time and have credentials forwarded upon every move to another congregation.
2. The congregation that currently holds the credentials of one entering into specialized transitional ministry or another congregation of the minister's choosing can call this person for all future service in this capacity, acting in cooperation with Pastor-Church Relations and councils of congregations to be served.
3. Supervision of specialized transitional ministers can be regulated according to Article 13-b in its current form.

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

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Joel R. Boot, executive director

Appendix A

Role of Advisers to Synod

I. Background and introduction

The Board of Trustees, in fall 2011, held a discussion regarding the role of advisers to synod and staff consultants, and decided to request the administration to prepare a report, with appropriate recommendations to help clarify the role of each group of synod advisers, for consideration by the BOT at a later time.

Executive director Rev. Joel Boot appointed a task force composed of Rev. Kathy Smith, Ms. Dee Recker, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff. In the process of this committee's work both Rev. Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), and Rev. Paul De Vries, CTS board chair, were engaged in the discussion. However, the recommendations below are those of the task force members. Therefore, in response to questions raised about the role of advisers to synod, this report includes a recounting of the current process for selection of advisers and guidelines for their functioning (Addendum 1), a history of the various advisers to synod (Addendum 2), and recommendations for revision of the guidelines to be used regarding the selection, participation, and function of advisers to synod.

The participation of advisers to synod is almost as old as synod itself. While there is no specific reference to the appointment of advisers prior to 1888, it is likely that the function precedes even that date. It is safe to say that the circumstances of synod in years past, and the need for advisers to synod at the present time, has changed significantly over the years. At the same time, assumptions about who those advisers are, who appoints them, and what their particular function is at synod have remained essentially unchanged. Synod itself has for the most part been silent on the subject of faculty advisers in recent years and, therefore, the role of faculty advisers is presumed primarily on the basis of historical precedent and, at least in part, is circumscribed by the seminary faculty itself. The addition of other types of advisers has been more prevalent in recent years, and several identifiable issues have developed, such as

- an increase in the number of advisers and types of advisers.
- variation in the role and function of advisers.
- lack of clarity about the roles and functions of advisers.
- concern about effective use of nondelegated advisers in serving synod.
- concern for strategic appointment of advisers to assist synod in accomplishing its work.
- lack of clarity regarding the difference between advisers and staff consultants.

The attached history section (Addendum 2) of this report shows the development of the use of advisers to synod through a survey of synodical actions related to advisers, outlining the various roles and purposes of these advisers. It also records some of the challenges to the practice of appointing advisers to synod, which further illuminates the understanding of these roles.

II. Observations

There is a difference between advisers whose purpose at synodical meetings is to provide their perspective on behalf of a group that is not normally well-represented at synod (historically, first, ethnic minorities; second, women; and third, young adults), and those advisers who are present to give advice related to a particular area or field of expertise on issues and procedures that synod must address (e.g., faculty advisers who give theological, historical, polity, and procedural advice; and the presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary). Yet another distinction is the staff support role expected from senior denominational staff who are present to serve synod in various ways. Such staff are deeply involved in the work of synod, but their status at synod has not been clearly defined.

Priority should always be given to assist the delegated members of synod, with advisers and staff providing support, functioning to assist synodical delegates in doing their work and making sound decisions. All advisers to synod and some denominational staff are assigned to specific advisory committees to participate without vote within the committees and (at the discretion of the president of synod) in the plenary sessions of synod. Presently, seminary faculty advisers have the privilege of the floor and have the freedom to speak to any issues before synod. Senior denominational staff are generally restricted to providing information as requested and do not participate in the discussions of synod except when requested to do so by the president of synod. Staff persons from the denominational agencies currently do not serve as advisers to synod but, rather, are normally given the privilege of the floor when matters related to the agency they represent are discussed.

Seminary faculty advisers presently serve synod as assigned by the seminary's vice president for academic affairs on a rotating basis and in consideration of their availability with regard to current workload. The Program Committee of synod assigns them to specific advisory committees so that most committees have a faculty adviser present. Unlike in past years when all seminary faculty attended synod every year (a practice that was changed in 1968), current faculty in the rotation of assignment may or may not be aware of, and knowledgeable about, all the issues that come before the synod, and are not necessarily chosen on the basis of their area of expertise. It seems to the committee that becoming a synod adviser by virtue of being a faculty member may have made sense at one time but may not necessarily be appropriate today. It is different when a seminary faculty member is asked to serve on a synodical study committee, because in that case the area of expertise is the primary consideration in selecting a faculty member who can best serve the study committee. Calvin College faculty members are also at times asked to function in a similar capacity on study committees. The need

for such expertise is appropriate, and the use of faculty for such purposes is valuable to the entire denomination.

III. Recommendations

The Board of Trustees submits the following recommendations to Synod 2013 for approval:

A. That synod acknowledge the importance of advisers in the work of synod and affirm the intent to select all future faculty advisers from a pool of qualified personnel. In the case of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes. The primary criteria for the selection of all advisers shall be their area of knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod, or (in the case of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives) their valuable perspective in discussions of denominational matters and in the work of synod.

B. That synod adopt regulations that apply to the role of all advisers to synod:

1. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.
2. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.
3. Advisers shall normally have access only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned by the program committee. A request to speak to, or be present at, another advisory committee is to be processed through, and approval is at the discretion of, the chair and reporter of that advisory committee.
4. Advisers normally shall not participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session unless specifically requested or permitted to do so by the president of synod.
5. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committee for which the adviser serves, but advisers are to be reminded that their role is to serve the delegates of synod in their deliberation and that the adviser's remarks should be framed as such.
6. Advisers are not permitted to vote in committee or in plenary sessions of synod.

C. That synod approve the following classifications of advisers:

1. *Faculty advisers* shall normally be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary and, as needed, from among the faculty of Calvin College. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:
 - a. The executive director shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary (or the administration of Calvin College,

- as needed), select as many faculty members with particular expertise as are needed for that year.
- b. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the executive director of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members available to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members. The same essential procedure shall be followed by the administration of Calvin College in the event that college faculty members are needed to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year.
 - c. Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - d. The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
2. *Ethnic advisers* are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven such ethnic minority nonvoting advisers may be appointed, subject to the selection rules as adopted by Synod 2005 (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, D). The number of seven (or proportion of) such persons shall be appointed as long as the total number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of ethnic minority advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of voting delegates from ethnic-minority origin exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of ethnic minority advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of ethnic minority advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three-year rolling average of diversity presence at synod.
 3. *Young adult representatives* are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Appointment of these representatives to synod is made according to the guidelines previously adopted by synod (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, E).
 4. *Staff consultants* are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the office of the executive director and designated by the executive director, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:
 - a. Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the executive director or his/her designee.
 - b. When the executive director assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then normally a faculty adviser will not be assigned to the same advisory committee.

- c. The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.
 5. *Agency board representatives and presidents of the educational institutions* (normally the agency board presidents and the agency directors) shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.
 6. *Board of Trustees of the CRCNA representation* shall consist of the chair of the BOT, one other member of the BOT Executive Committee, and the executive director of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees.
- D. That synod instruct the executive director's office to update the Rules for Synodical Procedure regarding advisers to reflect these decisions, specifically replacing the responsibilities of advisers listed in sections III, D, 3 and III, E, 3, and any other sections affected, with these new regulations that apply to all advisers to synod.

Role of Advisers to Synod Task Force
Peter Borgdorff
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Addendum 1

Selection of and Guidelines for Advisers to Synod

As outlined in the history section of this report, guidelines have been adopted by synod over the years for the appointment and function of the various advisers to synod. The following sections provide an outline of the present practices in place for soliciting and appointing the nominees, the follow-up to the appointments, and consideration of the adopted guidelines for the functioning of advisers at synod. Included in this advisory grouping are ethnic advisers, young adult representatives (formerly young adult advisers), and the seminary faculty advisers.

A. Selection process of advisers

The annual process for selection of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives to synod begins in the fall by sending a solicitation to all CRC churches and classes with a special request for nominees to serve as advisers to synod. Such nominations are due to the synodical services office by mid-January for the upcoming synod. It has been the practice to request nominees every two years because the request to the churches at times generated a large number of nominations. In more recent years, however, the number of nominations received for ethnic advisers has decreased significantly. The

Office of Race Relations supplements the list of ethnic adviser nominations received by the churches and classes.

Two forms for each ethnic adviser and young adult representative nominee are completed and returned—one by the clerk of council or stated clerk of classis and one by the nominee. By the end of January, the nominations are reviewed, and a recommendation for appointment is formulated for consideration by the Board of Trustees at its February meeting. In addition to the requirement that advisers to synod be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities, the following criteria are considered as recommendations for appointment are prepared for the Board:

1. Ethnic advisers (up to seven total)
 - List of advisers to previous year's synod to provide continuity
 - Diversity of ethnicities
 - Diversity of geographic regions in which nominees are members
 - Gender (for equal representation, if possible)
2. Young adult representatives (seven total)
 - List of representatives to previous year's synod to provide continuity
 - Diversity in age range (18-26 years)
 - Response to the question why they wish to serve as a representative to synod
 - Diversity of geographic regions in which nominees are members
 - Gender (for equal representation, if possible)
 - Ethnic diversity, as much as possible

In late February, following the appointment of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to synod (as well as alternates), the Office of Synodical Services sends a formal letter of invitation on behalf of the Board to each appointee and tracks their responses. In the event that one of the appointees is unable to serve, an alternate is contacted.

Also serving synod in an advisory capacity are faculty members of Calvin Theological Seminary (and, if necessary, of Calvin College). The selection process of faculty has traditionally been handled by the seminary (and, if necessary, the college) administration and is based on faculty members' current workload and their availability the week of synod. Included in the appointment by the seminary is a Church Order and polity expert as well as the seminary president. Up to eight faculty advisers are appointed each year.

B. Unique formula for ethnic advisers

One of the present challenges in the process set out by synod for the appointment of ethnic advisers is that the number of advisers required varies each year, depending on the number of delegates to synod who are people of color. As noted in the history section of this report, Synod 2005 adopted a "formula" for determining the number of ethnic advisers needed. Synod has requested that each of the forty-seven classes send one ethnic minority delegate as part of their delegation of four. At this point in time this goal has not yet been realized.

At each synod up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as ethnic advisers to synod. Per the decision of Synod 2005, the position of ethnic adviser will continue as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five. The Board of Trustees is tasked with appointing 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.

However, because synod delegate information is not received until mid-March or later, the data required for determining the number of ethnic advisers to synod is not available until that time. Meanwhile, ethnic adviser appointees are informed of their appointment and are told that in late March they will be notified as to whether they will be needed at synod. The synodical office has considered the option of not sending the ethnic adviser appointment letter until late March, but it seems that if we did that, it would be inconsiderate to give such late notice to those who would then need to plan to take a week away from families and jobs to attend synod.

In past years when fewer than seven ethnic advisers were needed, some graciously offered to withdraw from the list if not needed. But in other years it was necessary to decide who should be on the final list of attendees. So, in the absence of criteria or guidelines from synod for this process, the synodical office has made such decisions on the bases of continuity (appointment to the previous year's synod), diversity of ethnicities, and diversity of regions in which ethnic adviser nominees were CRC members.

C. Guidelines for function of advisers

Ethnic advisers are appointed to serve synod with advice regarding how decisions or conversations are shaped by the ethnic diversity within the Christian Reformed Church. It was decided to invite *young adult representatives* in order to learn from their unique and valuable perspective—so that the church can better understand the future needs of the Christian Reformed Church.

Both ethnic advisers and young adult representatives serve alongside delegates on the advisory committees of synod (in which the agenda for synod is deliberately reviewed for recommendations to the full synod assembly). Each has the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote in advisory committee proceedings.

Ethnic advisers and young adult representatives are expected to be present at the public plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

Each year, select seminary faculty advisers serve synod in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the seminary president, who must be present at every synod. Seminary faculty advisers are members of the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary who serve as advisers to the committees and to synod. In addition, the faculty advisers are given the privilege of the floor at synod to serve and to advise the leaders and officers of synod as they do their work, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of synod, may request their advice. They

also have opportunity to speak to particular issues, especially those in areas of their theological expertise.

Because the limited number of advisers within each group is fewer than the total number of synod advisory committees, the Program Committee (officers of the previous year's synod) may appoint some advisers to two committees if needed, or may decide that an adviser from a particular advisory group is not needed.

D. Closed sessions of synod

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, if synod enters into *executive session* to address unusual or delicate situations, the seminary advisers, ethnic advisers, and young adult representatives shall be present (as well as the staff consultants) along with the delegates. If delegates from fully recognized churches in ecclesiastical fellowship are present at synod, they also may remain in an executive session.

Likewise, if synod enters into *strict executive session* (in very unusual situations when such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honor or for the welfare of the church), the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary faculty advisers, the ethnic advisers, and the young adult representatives shall be present. If any of the above-mentioned persons are personally involved in the matter under discussion, they will absent themselves voluntarily or by synodical ruling.

E. Presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College

The presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and of Calvin College attend synod and have privilege of the floor as advisers to synod in matters pertaining to their respective institutions.

Addendum 2

History of Role of Advisers to Synod

I. Seminary faculty advisers

1888

Synod 1888 makes a reference to seminary professors with advisory vote, and such is mentioned as a regular practice in the following years.

1959

In 1959, synod received an overture proposing that seminary professors emeriti be present at synod in a limited advisory capacity, and not be on advisory committees except by request, because with an increase in seminary professors (from 6 to 11), there would be an increase of men with a permanent voice at synod who were not delegates to synod. The concern was "the danger of one group of office-bearers in the Church having an undue measure of influence in the major assembly of the Church" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 511). Synod did not accede to this overture on the grounds that the danger was not substantiated, and because it was "to the advantage of Synod to use the wisdom of emeritated professors . . . gained by years of experience" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 10).

1960

In 1960, there were five more overtures on this matter. Two asked for reconsideration of the 1959 overture and challenged the validity of the grounds for rejecting it; one asked that no professors emeriti be official advisers in any sense; and two broadened the issue by questioning the present rules covering the functions of the active professors as well as those emeritated. Concerns raised in these overtures were that professors emeriti give advice “limited to the field of theology in which they last served the church,” to “avoid the suspicion that the seminary faculty as a whole [had] too much influence at Synod,” and that they had “the privilege of the floor to the disadvantage of the regular members” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 418). The desire was to have the wisdom of emeritated professors available, but in a limited capacity because of the concern that if seminary professors had a permanent voice at synod, they would have “an unwarranted and unproportional amount of influence.” Further, one overture stated, “The present rule is not in harmony with the general and basic principle that Synod is a delegated body of office-bearers from the churches. Emeriti professors are not delegated nor are they active office-bearers” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 441). The concern was “to eliminate as much as possible, those factors which tend to burden the deliberative processes of Synod as a delegated body of office-bearers” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 442).

Synod 1960 granted the request for reconsideration and amended the Rules for Synodical Procedure to read as follows: “The emeriti professors shall have a limited advisory capacity, their advice to be given upon the request of the chairman or the Synod. They shall function as advisers to advisory committees upon the request of the Synod or an advisory committee” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 26). This, in effect, was exactly what the overture to Synod 1959 had asked for. The grounds were that “the increase in the numbers of seminary professors . . . has greatly increased the number of men who are not delegates but who have a permanent voice at synod,” and “emeriti professors are not active office-bearers in the church” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27). Synod 1960 did not accede to the overture to eliminate the practice of having emeriti professors at synod, stating, “It is to the advantage of Synod to use the wisdom of the emeritated professors, which has been gained by years of experience” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27).

Synod 1960 also received a recommendation to amend the rule governing all seminary professors—active and emeritated—as follows: “They shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising Synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of Synod, may request their advice” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27). The grounds were that “the advisory status of the professors is not adequately defined in the present rule” and “the judicious observance of this advisory status by the professors and the Synod will obviate the need for more detailed rules.” Synod withheld action on this recommendation (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27). Later that day, Synod returned to the matter and adopted a motion to “appoint a study committee to re-evaluate our present rules for synodical procedure regarding the place and function of the professors of Calvin Seminary as synodical advisers.” The grounds were “the increased number of theological professors and emeriti professors” and

“the increasing role of the professors in the deliberations of Synod” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 28).

1961

The study committee on Seminary Professors as Synodical Advisers reported to Synod 1961 (*Acts of Synod 1961*, pp. 354-58), having looked at the constituency of synod, the principles of equality enunciated in Article 84 of the Church Order, and the meaning of advisory members, which is that the seminary professors are not members of synod, but advisers to it. They noted that “the professors are present at Synod for advice only and are not present as regular delegates who are charged with the responsibility of deliberation and debate and decision.” Further, “the seminary professors are not members of Synod because they are not delegated by the church. However, the professors, because of their specialized knowledge and wide experience, should function at Synod as advisers and synod ought to avail itself of the special talents of those who serve our church as seminary professors” (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 357).

The study committee recommended revising the rules for synodical procedure to reflect this—that seminary professors would serve on advisory committees of synod and be present or available to synod for advice, upon the request of the chair or members of synod. Professors emeriti would serve on advisory committees when requested by synod and would be available to synod for advice upon the request of the chair or members of synod. The presidents of the seminary and the college would advise synod in matters pertaining to their institutions only, a rule that was not changed.

The advisory committee did not agree with the study committee in all respects. Synod 1961 adopted a recommendation that seminary professors serve on the advisory committees of synod. Synod 1961 also adopted this recommendation: “That the seminary professors be present at Synod where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising Synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of Synod, may request their advice.” The grounds were that the study committee’s recommendation “would curb the activity of our seminary professors unduly” and that “the former rule gave the seminary professors the same privilege of the floor as that given delegated members of Synod, while this reading emphasizes the fact that they are *advisers*” (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 52). This language adopted by Synod 1961 continues in the Rules for Synodical Procedure to the present day.

Synod 1961 also decided that professors emeriti would serve on advisory committees when requested by synod, and be available to synod for “advice, which is to be given upon the request of the chair or members” (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 53). So their role was limited as first proposed in the overture to Synod 1959. Synod 1961 also reinforced that the presidents of the seminary and the college were allowed to advise synod in matters pertaining to their respective institutions (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 53).

1965

Synod 1965 received a communication from the seminary faculty requesting that half of the faculty serve as advisers to synod per year on a system of rotation, rather than having all the faculty serve (referring to active faculty, not professors emeriti) (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 488). The recommendation was rejected by synod with no grounds given (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 19).

1968

Synod 1968 responded to a second communication from the seminary faculty with the same request as that of 1965 (*Acts of Synod 1968*, p. 617) by adopting this recommendation: “that only one-half of the seminary faculty shall be required to attend synod in an advisory capacity except the president who shall be present each year.” The ground: “The size of the faculty permits synod to have ample representation if only one-half are present” (*Acts of Synod 1968*, p. 68).

1980

Synod 1980 received an overture to restrict the role of seminary professors at synod, arguing that the actions of Synod 1961 in not adopting the study committee’s recommendation were inadequate and that the intent of the synod—that seminary professors are “*advisers* who do not have the same privilege of the floor as that given the delegated members of synod”—had not been achieved. The overture observed (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 577),

The current status for seminary professors at synod is that “they shall have the privilege of the floor *for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it*, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any member of synod may request their advice.”

- This, as it stands, can be understood to say that seminary professors have the full privilege of the floor to advise synod on *all* matters before it without their advice being requested. This puts them on an equal basis with the delegates of synod re the privilege of participating in discussion.
- However, *Ground b* of Synod’s 1961 decision indicates that this was not the intent of synod since it states explicitly that this is supposed to be an improvement over the former rule “which gave the seminary professors the same privilege of the floor as that given delegated members of synod, while this reading emphasizes the fact that they are *advisers*.”
- It has been the observation of many past delegates that the seminary professors, in line with a long tradition, feel that they have the freedom to become freely involved in the discussion of all the issues before synod, and that not merely in an advisory capacity.

Synod 1980 did not accede to the overture, not wanting to “unduly restrict the seminary professors in their advisory role at synod,” noting that the study committee’s advice on this matter in 1961 was never adopted, and that the classis “had not shown that the present policy is inadequate” (*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 19-20).

2006

The Rules for Synodical Procedure were changed in 2006 to say, "At each synod selected members of the seminary faculty shall be required to attend synod in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the president who shall be present at every synod" (section III, B, 1).

The wording "selected members of the seminary faculty" appeared in 2006, after having been "one-half of the seminary faculty" for all the years from 1968 to 2005. In 1968 synod had decided that the seminary only needed to send half of the faculty rather than all of them.

2010

Since 2006, seminary faculty advisers were assigned by the seminary's vice president for academic affairs first on a rotating basis and then on the basis of their availability as a portion of their teaching loads. The Program Committee of synod assigns them to advisory committees so that most committees have a faculty adviser present. In 2010, the seminary faculty decided that faculty advisers are required to be present at synod as long as their advisory committees are reporting, but not for the entire synodical session.

II. Staff consultants

1994

It appears that the matter of advisers did not come up again until Synod 1994, when the Board of Trustees requested that the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Ministries serve as advisers to synodical advisory committees, but synod did not accede to this request. Instead, synod adopted a recommendation that they serve as staff consultants as needed. The grounds stated, "There is a potential conflict of interest if their status is changed," and, "Advisers to synodical advisory committees are assigned to assist committees to do their work and have the right to have input on all discussions, whereas a consultant is called upon to respond to questions on specific matters" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 433). This decision informs the nature of the advisers who did serve on advisory committees.

III. Ethnic advisers

1995

Synod 1995 received an overture to include ten ethnic advisers at synod, based on the precedent of Scripture regarding a similar situation in Acts 6, the stated desire of several boards to include minorities, the desire of several minority members of the CRC to be at the table of policy and decision making at the synodical level, the need for a biblically compelling way and not "a quota system guaranteeing proportionate representation," and the belief that "attendance and participation at synod and on its advisory committees [would] be an effective training ground for persons from the nations to become so conversant with CRC policies and practices that delegation to synod and/or appointment to boards will be quickly forthcoming" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 395-96).

Synod 1995 adopted a recommendation that it accede to the overture "by including up to seven members from the various ethnic communities in the

CRC to serve as advisers to synod and that the Board of Trustees be asked to implement this practice for a period of five years,” based on the following grounds (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 694-95):

Grounds:

1. The CRC is a multiethnic church but has had minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates.
2. Several of the ethnic communities of the CRC have repeatedly stated that they yearn to be at the table of polity and decision making at the synodical level.
3. Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.
4. The presence of ethnic advisers would be affirming for delegates to synod from the various ethnic communities.
5. Attendance and participation at synod and on synodical advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.
6. This practice affirms a sense of CRC ‘ownership’ by various ethnic communities.
7. Should the practice prove counterproductive to the intended aims, it can be discontinued.

1996

Synod 1996 received a recommendation from the Board of Trustees regarding Guidelines for Ethnic Advisers to Synod, which they had used in appointing the advisers who came to serve at Synod 1996 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 26-28). Synod approved those guidelines (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 454-55), including the following qualifications and responsibilities, which were identical to those regarding seminary advisers:

Qualifications:

Ethnic advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

Responsibilities:

1. Ethnic advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Ethnic advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Ethnic advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

2000

Synod 2000 received a recommendation from the Board of Trustees noting that the five-year practice of appointing ethnic advisers was completed but that “no provision was made in 1995 to review this practice at the end of five years.” The Board also observed that it did not seem to be “presupposed that the practice would automatically continue.” The Board noted that a ground

to the decision of Synod 1995 suggested “that under certain circumstances it can be discontinued but doesn’t identify what criteria might be employed to determine whether to continue the practice.” The Board then asserted, “Ethnic advisers have been a positive force at synod and have helped to prepare ethnic-minority leaders for broader roles in the life of the CRC, including being chosen as delegates to synod in the years following their service as advisers. All of the positive hoped-for results identified in the original overture and in the grounds quoted above have been realized.” So the Board recommended “that synod continue the practice of appointing up to seven ethnic advisers to serve at synod for an additional five-year period with the expectation that Synod 2003 will appoint a committee to conduct a review of this practice and report back to Synod 2005. *Ground:* The positive results of this practice warrant a five-year continuation, after which there will be more evidence and experience by which to judge the practice” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 520-21). This recommendation was adopted by Synod 2000 (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 634).

2003

The Board of Trustees reminded Synod 2003 of the instruction of Synod 2000 to appoint a committee to review the practice of appointing ethnic advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 30-31). Synod 2003 adopted a recommendation to appoint a committee of nine members reflecting the ethnic diversity within the denomination to review the practice of appointing up to seven ethnic advisers to serve at synod each year. They were instructed “1) to evaluate this practice according to the original grounds as stated by Synod 1995; 2) to determine whether the practice encourages mutual enrichment, that is, that it is not only for the benefit of advisers and the communities they represent but is also, and perhaps more importantly, for the benefit of the whole church; 3) to gather information from at least the following respondents: past ethnic advisers, synod officers, advisory committee chairpersons and other delegates, minority and other appropriate churches, classes, and denominational officers; and 4) to recommend to Synod 2005 whether to continue the practice of appointing ethnic advisers and/or to suggest any modification of that practice” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 622). A committee of nine members was appointed by synod (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 681).

2005

Synod 2005 received the report of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 333-51). The study committee had conducted a survey regarding ethnic advisers and found that the percentage of ethnic delegates to synod had grown equal to the percentage of ethnic members in the CRC, but the committee wondered if that level of representation was acceptable, or if they should be considering the percentage of ethnic minorities in society, or the number of congregations that identify themselves as ethnic minorities (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 336). They also noted that the 1996 “Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God” recommended that classes recruit and assist ethnic minority persons to participate in classical and denominational ministries.

The study committee noted that the position of ethnic adviser had not become “the stepping stone envisioned by Synod 1995” but added that, “as one ethnic minority council said, ‘It is better than having no voice at all’” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 342). They did note that the position is one stream among many through which the denomination has attempted to incorporate ethnic minorities, and that progress is being made slowly in some significant ways on denominational boards and also at synod, with an ethnic minority officer elected in 2004 (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 343). The committee believed that the position of ethnic adviser “should be phased out as something more significant replaces it, something that flows naturally from the congregations and classes and something that is directly responsible to the classes” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 343). They recommended greater involvement of ethnic minorities in classes and recommended that the position of ethnic adviser to synod be continued as long as the number of ethnic delegates was less than twenty-five, and then discontinue it. They also recommended that synod encourage all classes to include at least one ethnic minority in their delegations, with the goal that all would do so by 2011. Further, they recommended that by way of exception, classes be allowed to send ethnic minority deacon delegates to synod.

Synod 2005 received four overtures to reject some or all of the recommendations of the committee, especially the goal for all classes to send one minority to synod each year by 2011, and three communications of concern about the recommendations (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 596-601, 603-4; *Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 681-84).

Synod *adopted* the following recommendations (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 755-56):

- 1) That synod encourage each classis to include at least one ethnic minority person in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006 (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 748).
- 2) That synod request all classes to develop a strategy to intentionally incorporate ethnic minorities into the life and government of the local church and broader assemblies and submit their plan to the BOT by March 15, 2007.
- 3) That synod encourage ethnic minority members of the denomination to participate in the meetings and activities of their classes.
- 4) That synod encourage classes to specifically invite ethnic minorities to participate in the meetings and activities of classis.
- 5) That synod remind councils and classes that the CRC Office of Race Relations is available to assist with leadership development and other services to incorporate ethnic minorities into the ongoing work of the church.
- 6) That synod continue the position of ethnic adviser as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which time it shall be discontinued. The Board of Trustees 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.

- 7) That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to report in the annual *Agenda for Synod*, and to make recommendations if necessary, on the denomination's progress in attaining its goal of at least one ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis and on the denomination's progress in incorporating ethnic minorities on denominational boards.

The practice approved in 2005 regarding ethnic advisers (recommendation 6 above) has been followed to the present, since the number of ethnic minority delegates has not reached twenty-five, although there were twenty-four in 2009.

IV. Women advisers

2000

Synod 2000 received the report of the Committee to Review the Decision Re Women in Office, which included the recommendation that until another review slated for 2005, "synod make provision to have up to seven women from various regions in the CRC serve as advisers to synod." The grounds: "1. Women can make a valuable contribution to the work of synod. 2. The presence and input of ethnic advisers have been beneficial to synod and the churches" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 387). That recommendation was adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 699). In effect, synod copied the practice of appointing ethnic advisers to synod, except that, unlike ethnic minority persons, women were not yet allowed as delegates to synod. It is interesting that until this decision was made, no female ethnic advisers were appointed to serve synod.

2001

Following the procedure for ethnic advisers in 1996, Synod 2001 received recommended guidelines for women advisers from the Board of Trustees which had been used in appointing the first set of women advisers to that synod (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 30-31). The qualifications and responsibilities were identical to those for ethnic advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 31):

Qualifications:

Women advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

Responsibilities:

1. Women advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Women advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Women advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

One overture and one communication opposed this action (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 333-34, 339-41), but synod did not accede to the overture (*Acts of*

Synod 2001, pp. 486-87). Synod adopted the guidelines as recommended by the BOT (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 493). So the guidelines worked out in the early 1960s with regard to seminary faculty advisers were repeated with ethnic and women advisers in the 1990s and 2000s.

2008

In 2008 the Board of Trustees' report noted (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 24),

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.

Synod's advisory committee made the following recommendation (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 479):

That synod, rejoicing in the steps we have taken on the path toward full participation, thankful for the women delegates present this year, and trusting that congregations and classes will continue along this path, discontinue the appointment of women advisers beginning in 2009.

Ground: Women advisers are no longer needed when we have women delegates who can fully participate instead of only advising.

The motion was defeated, and then a delegate presented the following motion (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 479):

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

Ground: Synod 2007 approved the appointment of women delegates.

This motion was adopted.

V. Youth observers, young adult advisers, young adult representatives

2009

Synod 2009 received a report from the BOT that it had "engaged in a conversation about the increased awareness of engaging our youth (18-26 year olds) in the denomination." The Board went on to say, "One important venue for bringing youth to the table and raising the awareness of the importance of these voices within our denomination is synod. Youth observers to synod will bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination. These individuals will take part by listening, observing, engaging delegates, and offering feedback to the process, agenda, and decisions upon the adjournment of synod. Appointment to the youth observer positions will be made by the Board of Trustees in May" (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 27). Six youth observers were present at Synod 2009, appointed by the BOT (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 563).

2010

Synod 2010 received a report from the BOT noting that youth observers brought “a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination” and appointed seven persons to serve as youth observers. The BOT also recommended “that Synod 2010 adopt the practice of appointing seven youth *advisers* to each meeting of synod beginning in 2011” (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 27). They provided guidelines for such advisers that were identical to those used for ethnic and women advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 42-43):

Qualifications

Youth advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christina Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

Responsibilities

1. Youth advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Youth advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Youth advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

Synod 2010 changed “the title *youth adviser* to *young adult adviser* to reflect the age category (between the ages of 18-26) in the guidelines presented to synod” and then adopted “the practice of appointing seven young adult advisers to each meeting of synod beginning in 2011.” Synod also instructed the Board of Trustees “to dialogue with a number of ethnic minorities to reconsider the use of the term *adviser* as it relates to the title *young adult adviser*” because “the term *young adult adviser* can be misunderstood in some cultures such as the Native American culture” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 830).

2011

Synod 2011 had four young adult advisers present (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 27) and received a recommendation from the BOT for a “Young Adult Summit for the purpose of engaging the young adults of our denomination in matters that are before the church” (p. 30), an idea proposed by a forum for young adults hosted by the Leadership Exchange (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, pp. 50-54).

Synod also received a report from the BOT on the instruction of Synod 2010 to “explore the implications of the term *young adult adviser* in response to concerns expressed by the Native American community” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 702, 712-13). In response to the findings of its study, the BOT recommended “that synod use the term *young adult delegate* to synod in place of the term *young adult adviser* to synod, and that the role clearly be defined as *non-voting* at meetings of synod,” because “in some cultures, it is inappropriate for young adults to be perceived as advising their elders or leaders” (p. 709).

According to the report, this new title was acceptable to the ethnic communities concerned (p. 713).

However, Synod 2011 adopted the recommendation of its advisory committee: “that synod use the term *young adult representative* in place of the term *young adult adviser*,” because “these invited young adults represent the interests of youth at synod,” “the word *representative* is a more neutral term that respects cultural concerns,” and “the term *young adult representative* describes their role at synod as distinct from that of the delegates” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 816).

Appendix B

Proposed Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

We are assembled as delegates to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to deliberate and decide on the issues here presented as synod’s agenda. We promise to do this work in obedience to the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ and in full agreement with what the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America confess.

We believe that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life. We affirm three creeds—the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, adopted by synod as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith, and of the Belhar Confession, adopted by synod as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration.

As we deliberate and make decisions consistent with these beliefs, to the best of our ability and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we promise to seek the unity and well-being of the church of Jesus Christ, who prayed that all his own may be one in him (John 17:20-23).

[After the reading of these words, delegates are asked to rise to indicate their agreement with the beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.]

Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity (Current Form)

Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the confession of the truth must be mentioned in the first place. The Savior therefore said, John 8:31, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples.” And again, “Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,” Matthew 10:32.

In obedience to the Lord and for the instruction of all, the assembly of elders, delegated by the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church, deem it proper that they publicly declare what the confession is of the church here mentioned and of every one of its churches.

All the congregations of this church believe all the books of the Old and of the New Testaments to be the Word of God, and confess as the true expression of their faith the Thirty-Seven Articles of the Confession of the Netherlands, formulated by the Synod of 1618-19, and also the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort against the Remonstrants.

In conformity with the belief of all these congregations, we, as members of their synod, declare that from the heart we feel and believe that all articles and expressions of doctrine, contained in the three above-named confessions, jointly called the three formulas of unity, in all respects agree with the Word of God, whence we reject all doctrines repugnant thereto; that we desire to conform all our actions to them, agreeably to the accepted Church Order, and desire to receive into our church communion everyone that agrees to our confession.

May the King of the church work this faith in the hearts of many and increase it, and may those that have received a like precious faith with us show the grace shown them in fellowship to the glory of him who prayed that all his own be one in him.

Appendix C

Press Release from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

January 4, 2013

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, on behalf of synod, has decided to lift the suspension of Rev. John Visser. With this decision Rev. Visser can resume his role as the pastor of the Maranatha CRC in Belleville, Ontario, effective immediately.

The decision of the Board is based on a series of communications with the council of Maranatha CRC, the completion of an assessment of the Healing Ministry Centre (also known as Restoration Ministries) by a professional consultant, and “a readiness for ministry” assessment performed by Midwest Ministry Development to which Rev. Visser submitted several months ago. The consultant who did the Healing Ministry Centre assessment made a number of recommendations, eleven of which have been, or are being, implemented. The council has decided that Rev. Visser will no longer be responsible for the operation of the Healing Ministry Centre. An agreement has also been reached to have the professional consultant provide ongoing oversight of the Healing Ministry Centre.

The Board of Trustees is releasing this public statement because it believes that transparency is an important value, and because this case has received widespread attention in the church, in Classis Quinte, and in the region of Belleville. The Board recognizes that there are some who believe that justice is not served by the decision to lift Rev. Visser’s suspension—and there are

some who desired a more in-depth assessment of both the Healing Ministry Centre's practices, as well as decisions made concerning it by the council of the church. The Board of Trustees wishes it to be clearly understood that the decision to lift the suspension was based exclusively on information provided by the council of Maranatha CRC, the "readiness for ministry" assessment, and the report of the Healing Ministry assessment provided by the professional consultant. The Board believes that its decision is within the parameters that were set by the decisions of Synod 2012 concerning this matter.

The Board received a number of communications from parties with widely divergent views concerning Maranatha's Healing Ministry. Because the judicial code process has already run its course, and because synod gave specific instructions concerning the matter to the Board of Trustees, it is the Board's judgment that the lifting of the suspension is warranted subject to the commitment of the church council to follow through on the recommended changes in the operation of the Healing Ministry.

It is the sincere hope and prayer of the Board of Trustees that healing may come to all who were affected, and to all who experienced brokenness and hurt.

Appendix D

Mandate for the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

I. Mandate

Facilitate a discovery process—a learning process for leaders and members of the CRC—in an examination of the following questions in order to come to a shared understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery and its consequences. The task force will be expected to keep the church informed throughout its work, conclude its work with a summary report of its findings, and, if appropriate, make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for further action.

II. Associate members

The task force is encouraged to expand its associate membership as it deems necessary, either initially or as the process unfolds. It should pay particular attention to including diverse perceptions, voices, and expertise. These associates should have an understanding of the CRC and its history/culture, but need not be members of the CRC.

III. Core questions

The discovery process should answer, but not necessarily be limited to, the following questions:

- How and why did the Doctrine of Discovery come to be, and what was the role of the church and European social/cultural attitudes in its creation and propagation?
- What were its principle effects on indigenous peoples during the age of conquest, particularly in what is now Canada and the United States?

- What are, if any, the continuing effects of the Doctrine of Discovery and its legacies (such as related legal instruments or cultural attitudes) on indigenous peoples, and do these effects vary in cause and manifestation in different locations in the United States and Canada?
- Has the Doctrine of Discovery and related instruments both expressed and shaped the dominant (European) culture in the United States and Canada and affected our ways of relating and ministering to each other in ways that may be not be well understood or acknowledged? If so, how?

IV. Process

The task force should consider the following participatory process and feel free to improve upon it:

- Plan and conduct a series of hearings to listen to testimony from native and aboriginal peoples in the United States and Canada regarding the questions posed in the mandate.
- Take into consideration the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada.
- Publicize the hearings through appropriate denominational channels as an educational opportunity for CRC members.
- Summarize the findings of the hearings in a report to the BOT by September 2014 and through the BOT to Synod 2015.
- Make specific recommendations to the BOT by September 2014 regarding further action the CRC should take on the Doctrine of Discovery and related issues.

Appendix E

A Better Together Proposal: Renewing the Denominational Covenant

I. Background

Synod 2012 instructed the Board of Trustees “to develop ways in which the Office of Pastor-Church Relations or others, such as church visitors and regional pastors, can become involved more quickly in situations where tensions are developing within a congregation. Experience suggests that early interaction provides a possibility of healthy resolution that becomes less likely after tensions have risen to a breaking point” (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 755). The Office of Pastor-Church Relations has responded to Synod’s request and has prepared a report for the Board’s consideration.

A motion carries to ask the ED to instruct the Office of Pastor-Church Relations to strengthen their report regarding early involvement of CRC ministries when tensions within a congregation have escalated by adding more information, possible guidelines, and specific recommendations for the BOT to address at its February meeting. In addition, it is requested that Rev. Thomasma or Rev. Van Niejenhuis be present at the February meeting when the report is discussed.

(BOT Minute 5026; Sept 27-29, 2012)

This request comes at a time when there are a number of conversations happening about how the CRCNA can better resource and serve its congregations across North America. There is a growing realization that

congregations need greater attention, support, and resourcing for the future. This is reflected in the denominational priority of “creating and sustaining healthy congregations.” Another indicator of the challenges facing congregations is the number of relationships between congregations and their pastors that have become difficult, some of which have led to separations. While not all separations should be seen as “difficult,” the reality is that many are. This trend does not arise in isolation but is one marker of the challenges facing congregations today.

Given this background, our recommendations seek to address key leverage points and areas of acute opportunity, especially those that are currently accessible to the Office of Pastor-Church Relations. This should not be seen as an attempt to paint the whole picture. There will be many *other helpful initiatives* that warrant careful attention and, possibly, effective implementation. At this time we call special attention to initiatives that

- help guide future leaders through the discerning processes of **vocational assessment**.
- incorporate the coordinated **coaching strategy** that was developed and delegated to the Leadership Exchange.
- give a boost to **local congregations** who hope to initiate **new ministries** but lack the financial resources to do so.

One additional comment: In developing this response, we had to make choices relative to the scope of what we would recommend. We could opt for a *very limited response* that added a few very specific strategies and resources to “becoming involved earlier.” Or, we could emphasize the systemic nature of the problem and provide a response that was **more “global”** in scope. This document is positioned *between those two options*. A narrow response would seem to be myopic and unrealistic, given the complexity of the challenges. A “global” response would seem to add another table of conversation at which larger denominational issues are already being addressed. Thus, we see this response as a specific response to the BOT’s request that also recognizes the systemic nature of the challenges being faced.

This proposal arises out of our observation that the “disintegration of community” is, of all the challenges facing the CRCNA, the most pervasive, multilayered, and insidious trend, as well as the most opportune point of entry for both hopeful and realistic strategies. Acknowledging the current situation as *critical* means acknowledging there is both **danger** and **opportunity**. And, as many have come to learn, these kinds of times can help congregations find creative and new ways to be together with a fresh awareness of gospel hope.

II. Guiding propositions

The Alban Institute describes congregational life these days as a time of “turmoil and ferment.” *Turmoil* describes the coming apart of what is good—a drifting toward chaos that is full of hazard and hurt. *Ferment* describes the miraculous process by which, for example, ordinary grape juice becomes fine wine. One sign that helpful transformation (ferment) is happening is when a congregation is learning to engage their differences in strategic and constructive ways. And wherever this is happening, we will tend to see occasions of conflict as well as the capacity to steward that conflict in ways that lead

to growth, maturation, and a more vital ministry. Synod's request for ways to intervene earlier may be focusing on painful situations that cause a great deal of distress. But it might also be interesting to learn at what level communities of faith are learning to engage their differences as an aspect of their faith formation in becoming more mature disciples of Christ.

There will be value in communicating with CRCNA congregations that although some of them are flourishing, the status quo for many is not likely to provide the needed readiness and resources for the coming season of life in the CRCNA. A sense of *hopeful urgency* will be helpful.

III. General statements regarding congregational support

- The way forward will pay attention to *tradition* and *innovation*. Strategic approaches will honor both emphases in our shared life as a denomination.
- There are a variety of engagement strategies that may be helpful to the denomination's role of supporting congregations. There is *no one right way*.
- There are a variety of persons/partnerships that could be helpful in serving congregations. There is *no one set of personal aptitudes* required for consultants/coaches, etc., to contribute to serving congregations.
- There are *strategies* and *personal approaches* that are *more likely to do harm* than good in congregations and in the relationship between congregations and the denomination.

IV. Effective strategy overview

These statements contain much of what is to be valued. They are in no particular order, and only some are explicitly contained in the recommended initiatives. But they all represent important values.

An effective strategy will

- be built on a foundation of dependence upon God through individual and corporate prayer, the mystery of his ways, and a deep listening to God's Word for teaching about the nature of God and those he identifies as the church (ecclesiology). The story of the church must be embedded in the story of the coming of the kingdom.
- recognize that God has welcomed us with unimaginable hospitality. An effective strategy will reflect this hospitality not only within the often-mentioned areas of diversity such as gender, ethnicity, age, and nationality, but also within the diversity of ideologies in the CRCNA.
- include all/most denominational ministries that interact with congregations.
- seek to develop innovative ways to build on existing and time-tested elements of our tradition.
- engage young adults in the inner circles of conversation.
- recognize that our congregations need pastors who are capable and committed to be effective pastors, preachers, and leaders.
- be attentive to dynamics at work that are encouraging or (discouraging) capable and gifted young people to enter the professional ordained ministry.

- be *iterative*—encouraging the development of the CRCNA denomination as a learning community. A key dimension of this learning environment is that it will have *multiple directions of learning*—no fixed roles of *denomination as teacher* and *congregation as learner*.
- be informed by a *variety of “lenses”* through which we look at the life and ministry of individual congregations and the denomination. These will include lenses such as prominent biblical metaphors, polarity management, family systems, narrative theory, grief and loss, the local theological accent, congregational life-cycle, etc. *No one lens* will be treated as sufficient for every situation and context.
- be supported by *fresh and engaging metaphors* that picture a hopeful way forward *and* the way we relate to each other as we move forward. One example might be the vision of encouraging the development of *“conspiratorial cohorts.”* These are learning communities that “breathe together” as they “breathe in harmony with the Spirit of God.” Our experience with pastor peer groups suggests the multifaceted benefits of this experience.
- *“screen out” approaches and well-intentioned persons* that have a higher potential of doing harm to the congregation. It will also provide a mechanism to *vet, endorse, and encourage* those that show promise of being helpful.
- include an increased participation of *regional delivery* persons and partnerships. While some of these would be contracted local consultants, the role of classis, particularly the classical “church visitors,” is important. Church visitors constitute an existing capacity in need of renewal yet strategically full of promise.
- include *increased skill and capacity to support pastors, their spouses, and families*.
- include *increased support of lay leaders* and congregational leadership teams.
- include an *increased use of technology* in support of growing relationships.
- include coherent messages from multiple sources (Denominational Office, *The Banner*, Home Missions, Faith Formation, Specialized Ministries, etc.) that call congregations to attend to their life and ministry in fresh ways. We, as denomination, classes, congregations, and members, will be “better together” in so many arenas and on so many fronts.
- address the acute technical deficiency in our current denominational situation that is in the area of *engagement, delivery, and connectedness* with classes and congregations.

V. *Better Together* initiatives will emphasize “connecting”

First, a word about how we see the connecting initiatives described in this section and the way they relate to each other: The “connecting message” (A) may be the simplest to implement, but will not have much impact without some form of the “connecting relationships” strategy (B). The “connecting relationships” strategy is the most straightforward response to the BOT’s request for ways to “become involved earlier.” Further, “connecting events” (C) is admittedly a **stretch**, and we do not see it having much merit as a

solitary initiative. From our perspective, it makes sense only in the context of also implementing the “connecting relationships” initiative.

A. *A Connecting Message: Connecting our story to the big story*

The story of Christ and the coming of God’s kingdom is the hope-saturated narrative that captures our hearts, our imaginations, and our very lives as individuals and communities. The CRC story belongs as a narrative within that larger story. Our **only** comfort and challenge is that we belong within this vastly larger narrative. The connecting message will provide old and fresh accents, metaphors, and anecdotal indicators that emphasize the big story and, in measured voice, express gratitude for the CRC’s participation in it.

A pervasive theme of God’s story is the drawing of his church and world toward *shalom*. Among the profuse dimensions of *shalom* is the bringing together of what has been broken or pulled apart.

We see a need for this clear connecting message to invite and challenge the often competing values in the CRCNA to engage and converse in creative and hospitable ways. Some of these connections are

- governance and mission
- church planters and established church pastors
- tradition and innovation
- conservatives and progressives
- inreach and outreach
- strong clergy leadership and strong lay leadership
- pietism, doctrinalism, and Kuyperianism
- prayer meetings and budget discussions

This connecting message, while building on what is familiar and sure, will need to introduce fresh language, image, and metaphor. For example, what does “dying and rising with Christ” mean for the CRC today? How might “conspiratorial cohorts” (breathing together with God and each other) provide a fresh look at team?

This *connecting message* would be expressed by various elements of the denomination’s leadership, including synod, the BOT, the executive offices, and the various ministries that share the platform of communication. The constituency needs to observe and experience *a sense of the leadership team* as one way in which God is blessing the CRCNA on the way of *shalom*.

B. *Connecting Relationships: Affirming the “body” of the church*

“From [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16).

Followers of Christ are necessarily “in community.” Today this notion of community is remarkably countercultural. Robert Putnam’s classic work *Bowling Alone* identifies the loss of social capital as a pervasive trend in North America. The relational connections that once characterized our communities have become thin and frayed. And for Christians, social capital *in Christ* is a necessity. Putnam’s sequel, *Better Together*, identifies places and ways in which organizations have developed strategies for increasing social capital. We see this directional shift as inherent in strengthening the

corporate life of the denomination and all of its constituent communities. Connections need to be nurtured between

- persons and persons
- persons and their church
- persons and the denomination
- churches and other churches
- churches and their communities
- church and classis
- congregations and the denomination
- classis and the denomination

How might these connections be developed, encouraged, and supported? We observe several **key leverage points** that have potential to be creatively exploited for our “better together” life.

1. Classical church visitors

Classical church visitors have been around for a long time. Their effectiveness has been recognized but is highly uneven. And, apart from some guidelines and encouragement to practice church visiting, there has been minimal support from the denomination for effectively developing this practice. We believe this *tradition* can be an important dimension to responding more effectively to congregations in a timely and strategic way.

The *innovation* we offer is for the denominational staff to be more involved in walking alongside classes in the selection, support, learning/training, connecting, and consulting with church visitors. And this support includes strategies for connection that give church visitors a sense that they are part of a larger team.

2. Regional pastors

Regional pastors have been an important part of our response to pastors and their families for thirty years. They have provided a wonderful service, but that service has been uneven and has received some, but not much, denominational support. This aspect of our *tradition* could well be developed, supported, and strengthened through *innovative* strategies for selection, training, resourcing, community, and evaluation that could yield helpful results in the early support of pastors, their spouses, and their families.

We see value in deepening a sense of partnership between regional pastors and denominational staff. The sense of *team*, and the appreciative, guiding support of this work, could yield a more responsive personal presence in the lives of our pastors and their families. In many challenging situations this could assist pastors to become more resourceful and resilient in dealing with inevitable challenges facing pastors and congregations today.

3. The mentoring program

The mentoring program is another initiative that has had significant value, but its potential has not been maximized. Too frequently we have discovered that pastors who are struggling in their role have not had an active mentoring relationship. So this *tradition* could be more effective

if a mentoring culture were further reinforced through more engaged denominational attention.

The *innovation* we recommend is to foster a greater sense of community around the mentoring initiative. Dedicating more staff time to mentoring could help strengthen the relationships that are going well and could identify earlier pastors who are drifting toward isolation—somewhat because of the breakdown or neglect of the mentoring relationship.

4. Peer learning groups

Peer learning is a new tradition showing great promise in supporting pastors and others as we move into the future. In the spirit of a former tradition called “internos,” peer learning groups are providing safe places for sharing, learning, and growing. Some *innovations* worth expanding are using this model with pastor spouses, lay leaders, and congregational ministry staff.

5. Independent consultants

One additional set of relationships that would benefit from some attention are those that Pastor-Church Relations has with independent consultants. Being alert to appropriately gifted and committed people will continue to be part of the strategy going forward, but the challenges of identifying, vetting, and administering this opportunity make it difficult to program.

6. Implementation of “Connecting Relationships”

We envision the development of a denominational team attached to the Office of Pastor-Church Relations—in its current or future iteration. This team would be made up of individuals who, together, are strategic, relational, hospitable, and capably administered. We envision a team of five; some of whom are current staff who could be redeployed for this team effort. The need for additional staff would be determined once this team has developed its more specific strategies and identified any needed skills or capacities that remain unaddressed. It is conceivable that some members of this team would be current employees made available through other restructuring initiatives within the larger denominational ministry.

In this scenario, the present priorities of the current consultation staff would be shifted a bit toward resourcing church visitors, regional pastors, mentors, and consultants. But they also would continue to provide some direct service to congregational leaders.

In addition, a logical dimension of this implementation strategy is that *connecting guidelines, protocols, strategies, and best practices* would arise out of, and be fed back into, the growing engagement among the leaders of congregations, classes, and the denominational staff.

Note: We recognize the strategic thinking, collaboration, and writing that has been invested in the arena of *coaching*. We believe this is an avenue that needs to be explored further from a multiagency platform. We have not repeated it expressly in our proposal but do believe it could hold promise for helping our congregations and their leaders to flourish. And we would encourage the conversations around *leadership development* to pay careful attention to the proposal that the BOT approved in principle (January 2012), that was referred to the Leadership Exchange, and that is currently being

reviewed as part of the Leadership Development scan facilitated by Rev. Duane Kelderman.

C. Connecting Events: Engaging and renewing

1. Establishing contemporary signs of “Ebenezer” and expectation

A series of four to six regional gatherings (two per year) scheduled in six locations for classical and congregational leader teams (total 24 or 36 gatherings). These would be

- consistent venues to aid in “remembering”
- intentionally binational
- whole-personed—body, mind, spirit—pray, work, play, reflect, share, including “best practices” learned from synod, classis renewal, prayer summits, and various learning events such as those of “positive change” sponsored by Sustaining Congregational Excellence
- attended by three- to five-person “teams” from congregations and classes
 - e.g., from congregation: pastor, elder, deacon, ministry leader
 - from classis: church visitor, regional pastor, mentor, synodical deputy, Home Missions regional leader
- planned through a “representative” team
- provide consistency in programming through a cohort of facilitators—similar “menus,” similar topics, different facilitators
- be connected to each other by such strategies as
 - keynote presentations “captured” and shown at each venue
 - learning summaries from each gathering that are shared at the other venues
- consistent leadership for mutual learning and growth
- intentional conversations and learning that capitalize both on the like-mindedness among us and the diversity of perspective

2. Sites distributed in various locations, such as

- Seattle or Abbotsford
- Southern California
- Chicago
- Toronto or suburb
- Eastern seaboard (e.g., Mystic, Conn.)
- Houston or Phoenix
- Kalamazoo

These events would be supported by and connected to webinars, video conferences, and group conversations arranged by and at times facilitated by denominational staff.

We are not addressing the question of financial implications and resources **for the initiatives laid out in this proposal**. However, we do believe that this third element of the proposal, **connecting events**, could be financed through a combination of participant fees, denominational grants, underwriting from foundations, or major donors.

Also, we see this third element as, in some measure, an *adaptive* response, the positive results of which could be significant but are hard to predict.

VI. Conclusion

The approach and initiatives we have proposed are our best effort at providing a substantive, yet reasonable, response to the request of the Board of Trustees and synod. We believe it has merit and yet does not hold guarantees for effectively addressing all the concerns we face together. However, we do envision these efforts as being located within the larger story of what God is doing in the world, and God will not be thwarted in its purposes.

We believe there is urgency in our situation. Some change is needed, but this is all undergirded by well-founded hope—anchored in the resurrection of our Lord that envisions *shalom* for the world God loves and redeems. There are no guarantees relative to the future trajectory of the CRC, but our efforts are built on the foundation of resurrection hope.

Appendix F

Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Ministries International Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,352		225		1,577
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	4,259	-	806	99	5,164
Receivables & Advances	319	-	-	-	319
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-		-	-	-
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-		-	-	-
PP & E	512	-	-	-	512
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	6,442	-	1,031	99	7,572
Accounts Payable	574	-	-	-	574
Notes/Loans Payable	363	-	-	-	363
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	684	-	-	-	684
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,621	-	-	-	1,621
Net Assets	\$ 4,821	-	1,031	99	5,951
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Isaac Jen endowment fund and Media Reach Fund.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Ministries International
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,663	\$	3,603
% of Total Income		39.1%		36.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,823	\$	4,224
Estate Gifts	\$	1,254	\$	1,944
Total Gift Income		5,077		6,168
% of Total Income		54.2%		61.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	624	\$	226
Total Other Income		624		226
% of Total Income		6.7%		2.3%
TOTAL INCOME		9,364		9,997
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	2,210	\$	2,428
FTEs		12		14
International	\$	4,239	\$	4,633
FTEs		17		17
Education	\$	120	\$	151
FTEs		2		2
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,569	\$	7,212
Total Program Service FTEs		31		33
% of Total \$		70.0%		74.9%
% of Total FTEs		75.6%		76.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,044	\$	731
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,769	\$	1,684
FTEs		6		6
Total Support Service \$		2,813		2,415
Total Support Service FTEs		10		10
% of Total \$		30.0%		25.1%
% of Total FTEs		24.4%		23.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,382	\$	9,627
TOTAL FTEs		41		43
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(18)	\$	370

Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2012-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 13,668	-	-	-	13,668
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	20,906	-	-	-	20,906
Inventory	593	-	-	-	593
Prepays & Advances	2,070	-	-	-	2,070
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	10,092	-	3,235	13,438	26,765
Equities	48,913	-	15,677	65,132	129,722
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	4,387	-	1,406	5,841	11,634
PP & E	234,789	-	-	-	234,789
Other	1,948	-	-	-	1,948
Total Assets	337,366	-	20,318	84,411	442,095
Accounts Payable	3,591	-	-	-	3,591
Notes/Loans Payable	131,684	-	-	-	131,684
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	6,122	-	-	-	6,122
Deferred Income	1,688	-	-	-	1,688
Other	80,272	-	-	-	80,272
Total Liabilities	223,357	-	-	-	223,357
Net Assets	114,009	-	20,318	84,411	218,738
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Over 1,249 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 10-11 Actual	Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,624	\$ 2,653
% of Total Income	2.1%	2.1%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 2,914	\$ 2,950
Estate Gifts	\$ 20	\$ 23
Total Gift Income	2,934	2,973
% of Total Income	2.4%	2.4%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 115,870	\$ 118,035
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,923	\$ 1,146
Total Other Income	118,793	119,181
% of Total Income	95.5%	95.5%
TOTAL INCOME	124,351	124,807
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 104,590	\$ 108,119
FTEs	606	605
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	104,590	108,119
Total Program Service FTEs	606	605
% of Total \$	84.9%	85.0%
% of Total FTEs	76.6%	77.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 7,466	\$ 7,720
FTEs	71	68
Plant Operations	\$ 8,073	\$ 8,023
FTEs	74	73
Fund-raising	\$ 3,020	\$ 3,300
FTEs	40	40
Total Support Service \$	18,559	19,043
Total Support Service FTEs	185	181
% of Total \$	15.1%	15.0%
% of Total FTEs	23.4%	23.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 123,149	\$ 127,162
TOTAL FTEs	791	786
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 1,202	\$ (2,355)

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

	-----June 30, 2012-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,286	-	2	-	1,288
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	199	-	2,324	-	2,523
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	15,214	3,435	18,649
Equities	-	-	1,464	10,693	12,157
Partnerships	-	-	1,839	-	1,839
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	1,153	1,153
PP & E	11,642	-	-	-	11,642
Other	-	92	-	-	92
Total Assets	13,127	92	20,843	15,281	49,343
Accounts Payable	325	-	2,963	-	3,288
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	300	-	300
Capital Leases	12	-	-	-	12
Annuities Payable	-	-	182	-	182
Deferred Income	152	-	-	-	152
Other	1,862	-	(1,676)	-	186
Total Liabilities	2,351	-	1,769	-	4,120
Net Assets	\$ 10,776	92	19,074	15,281	45,223
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Office building in endowment - investment income.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Accounts payable: Early retirement and post retirement liabilities Notes/Loans Payable: Net 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.	Ag Desig A/P =Post-retirement cost other than pension=\$2,010M SFAS158 portion=\$953M, Also, Due to and from shown as "other."				

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

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,945	\$	2,923
% of Total Income		42.8%		42.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	711	\$	805
Estate Gifts	\$	200	\$	85
Total Gift Income		911		890
% of Total Income		13.2%		13.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	2,161	\$	2,284
Grants	\$	829	\$	747
Miscellaneous	\$	36	\$	22
Total Other Income		3,026		3,053
% of Total Income		44.0%		44.5%
TOTAL INCOME		6,882		6,866
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,587	\$	2,867
FTEs		29		29
Public Service	\$	72	\$	38
FTEs		1		1
Academic Support	\$	1,080	\$	552
FTEs		4		4
Student Services	\$	496	\$	574
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	346	\$	385
FTEs		2		2
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,581	\$	4,416
Total Program Service FTEs		40		40
% of Total \$		67.1%		65.7%
% of Total FTEs		72.7%		72.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,252	\$	1,153
FTEs		9		9
Plant Operations	\$	499	\$	574
FTEs		2		2
Fund-raising	\$	495	\$	574
FTEs		4		4
Total Support Service \$		2,246		2,301
Total Support Service FTEs		15		15
% of Total \$		32.9%		34.3%
% of Total FTEs		27.3%		27.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,827	\$	6,717
TOTAL FTEs		55		55
Post-retirement cost other than pension >				
				(352)
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	55	\$	(203)

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

	December 31, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 678	-	-	-	678
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	819	-	-	-	819
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	397	-	-	-	397
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,093		-	-	2,093
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)			-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,987	-	-	-	3,987
Accounts Payable	49	-	-	-	49
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	531	-	-	-	531
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	580	-	-	-	580
Net Assets	\$ 3,407	-	-	-	3,407
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

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

	2011 Actual	2012 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:		
Participant Premiums	\$ 10,528	\$ 10,851
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ 74	\$ 62
Total Other Income	10,602	10,913
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	10,602	10,913
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 8,679	\$ 7,913
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 1,482	\$ 1,656
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 448	\$ 239
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 10,609	\$ 9,808
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	97.2%	96.6%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 309	\$ 345
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	309	345
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 10,918	\$ 10,153
TOTAL FTEs	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (316)	\$ 760

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

	December 31, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 184	-	-	-	184
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	410	-	-	-	410
Equities	2,622	-	-	-	2,622
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	212	-	-	-	212
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,428	-	-	-	3,428
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 3,428	-	-	-	3,428
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

		2011 Actual	2012 Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	- \$	-
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Employer Contributions	\$	310 \$	375
Participant Contributions	\$	27 \$	32
Investment Earnings	\$	(92) \$	233
Total Other Income		245	640
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		245	640
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	250 \$	195
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	250 \$	195
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		99.2%	98.5%
% of Total FTEs			
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	2 \$	3
FTEs		-	-
Plant Operations	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		2	3
Total Support Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		0.8%	1.5%
% of Total FTEs			
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	252 \$	198
TOTAL FTEs		-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(7) \$	442

Employees' Savings Plan United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

Balance Sheet (0000)

	December 31, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	4,831	-	-	-	4,831
Equities	17,724	-	-	-	17,724
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	2,617	-	-	-	2,617
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	25,172	-	-	-	25,172
Accounts Payable	24	-	-	-	24
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	24	-	-	-	24
Net Assets	\$ 25,148	-	-	-	25,148
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

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

		2011 Actual		2012 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Contributions	\$	1,857	\$	2,059
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	(375)	\$	2,975
Total Other Income		1,482		5,034
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		1,482		5,034
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$	1,525	\$	1,326
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,525	\$	1,326
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		92.5%		90.2%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	124	\$	144
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		124		144
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		7.5%		9.8%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	1,649	\$	1,470
TOTAL FTEs		1		1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(167)	\$	3,564

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2012				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 453	-	25	-	478
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	414	-	-	-	414
Inventory	1,689	-	-	-	1,689
Prepays & Advances	47	-	-	-	47
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	231	-	-	-	231
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	222	-	-	-	222
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,056	-	25	-	3,081
Accounts Payable	894	-	-	-	894
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	33	-	-	-	33
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	927	-	-	-	927
Net Assets	\$ 2,129	-	25	-	2,154
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,035	\$	1,017
% of Total Income		20.3%		20.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	300	\$	317
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		300		317
% of Total Income		5.9%		6.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	3,204	\$	3,363
Grants	\$	212	\$	235
Miscellaneous	\$	336	\$	69
Total Other Income		3,752		3,667
% of Total Income		73.8%		73.3%
TOTAL INCOME		5,087		5,001
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	1,275	\$	1,322
FTEs		4		4
Education	\$	3,433	\$	3,843
FTEs		19		19
World Literature	\$	415	\$	465
FTEs		3		3
Teacher Training	\$	145	\$	145
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,268	\$	5,775
Total Program Service FTEs		26		26
% of Total \$		87.2%		87.7%
% of Total FTEs		92.9%		92.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	773	\$	808
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		773		808
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		12.8%		12.3%
% of Total FTEs		7.1%		7.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,041	\$	6,583
TOTAL FTEs		28		28
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(954)	\$	(1,582)

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

	June 30, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ -	1,449	445	-	1,894
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities			-		-
Receivables & Advances	616	-	-	-	616
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	4	-	-	-	4
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	646	-	-	646
Equities	43	253	725	150	1,171
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	18	-	-	-	18
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	681	2,348	1,170	150	4,349
Accounts Payable	463	-	-	-	463
Notes/Loans Payable	24	-	-	-	24
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	211	-	-	-	211
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	698	-	-	-	698
Net Assets	\$ (17)	2,348	1,170	150	3,651
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Mission Trg Fund: \$397; Hawaii: \$1,432; Estate special proj: \$225				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: 39; Can Legacy: \$53; Short term loan: \$483; CMI: 520				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Emerging Leader Trust: \$150				

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

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,709	\$	3,792
% of Total Income		65.3%		51.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,320	\$	1,677
Estate Gifts	\$	258	\$	1,213
Total Gift Income		1,578		2,890
% of Total Income		27.8%		39.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	112	\$	522
Miscellaneous	\$	282	\$	111
Total Other Income		394		633
% of Total Income		6.9%		8.7%
TOTAL INCOME		5,681		7,315
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Ministry Teams	\$	4,841	\$	4,308
FTEs		24		22
Ministry Devel & Planning	\$	563	\$	733
FTEs		5		5
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,404	\$	5,041
Total Program Service FTEs		29		27
% of Total \$		79.8%		78.8%
% of Total FTEs		78.4%		77.1%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	734	\$	668
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	636	\$	688
FTEs		6		6
Total Support Service \$		1,370		1,356
Total Support Service FTEs		8		8
% of Total \$		20.2%		21.2%
% of Total FTEs		21.6%		22.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,774	\$	6,397
TOTAL FTEs		37		35
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(1,093)	\$	918

Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2012-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 9,004	-	-	-	9,004
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	22,413	-	-	-	22,413
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	31,417	-	-	-	31,417
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	24,538	-	-	-	24,538
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	24,538	-	-	-	24,538
Net Assets	\$ 6,879	-	-	-	6,879
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Loan Fund
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual	Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$ -
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	1,282	\$ 1,190
Total Other Income		1,282	1,190
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,282	1,190
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Loan Interest	\$	681	\$ 561
FTEs		1	1
Provision for loan losses	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	681	\$ 561
Total Program Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		70.9%	65.9%
% of Total FTEs		33.3%	33.3%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	280	\$ 290
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		280	290
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		29.1%	34.1%
% of Total FTEs		66.7%	66.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	961	\$ 851
TOTAL FTEs		2	2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	321	\$ 339

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

	-----December 31, 2012-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 1,060	212	-	-	1,272
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	95	1	-	-	96
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	7,643	-	-	-	7,643
Equities	26,835	-	-	-	26,835
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	35,633	213	-	-	35,846
Accounts Payable	125	3	-	-	128
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	125	3	-	-	128
Net Assets	\$ 35,508	210	-	-	35,718
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

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

		MPF 2011 Actual		MPF 2012 Actual		SAF 2011 Actual		SAF 2012 Actual
ADDITIONS:								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	29	\$	11
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		90.6%		78.6%
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	\$	4,079	\$	3,196	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Investment Earnings/(Losses)	\$	(730)	\$	3,287	\$	3	\$	3
Total Other Income		3,349		6,483		3		3
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		9.4%		21.4%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		3,349		6,483		32		14
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):								
Program Services:								
Distributions	\$	2,318	\$	2,444	\$	14	\$	121
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	2,318	\$	2,444	\$	14	\$	121
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		81.8%		79.5%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				
Support Services:								
Management & General	\$	517	\$	629	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		517		629		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		18.2%		20.5%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	2,835	\$	3,073	\$	14	\$	121
TOTAL FTEs		1		1		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	514	\$	3,410	\$	18	\$	(107)

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

	-----December 31, 2012-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 2,781	128	-	-	2,909
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	204	-	-	-	204
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	14,012	-	-	-	14,012
Equities	67,029	-	-	-	67,029
Diversified / Alternative	9,834	-	-	-	9,834
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	89	-	-	-	89
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	\$ 93,949	128	-	-	94,077
Accounts Payable	41	11	-	-	52
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	41	11	-	-	52
Net Assets	\$ 93,908	117	-	-	94,025
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

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

	MPF 2011 Actual	MPF 2012 Actual	SAF 2011 Actual	SAF 2012 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 33	\$ 21
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	97.1%	9.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 5,045	\$ 5,222	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200
Investment Earnings	\$ 1,185	\$ 12,036	\$ 1	\$ 1
Total Other Income	6,230	17,258	1	201
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	2.9%	90.5%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	6,230	17,258	34	222
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 8,994	\$ 9,947	\$ 135	\$ 161
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 8,994	\$ 9,947	\$ 135	\$ 161
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	89.2%	90.1%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 1,090	\$ 1,091	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	2	2	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	1,090	1,091	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	-	-
% of Total \$	10.8%	9.9%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 10,084	\$ 11,038	\$ 135	\$ 161
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (3,854)	\$ 6,220	\$ (101)	\$ 61

INCLUDED IN SYNODICAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,363	\$	3,614
% of Total Income		75.1%		76.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	543	\$	580
Estate Gifts	\$	13	\$	4
Total Gift Income		556		584
% of Total Income		12.4%		12.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	208	\$	239
Grants	\$	7	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	347	\$	289
Total Other Income		562		528
% of Total Income		12.5%		11.2%
TOTAL INCOME		4,481		4,726
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	219	\$	209
FTEs		1		1
Race Relations	\$	453	\$	449
FTEs		3		3
Pastor-Church Relations/SCE/SPE	\$	1,410	\$	1,327
FTEs		5		5
Safe Church Ministry	\$	230	\$	187
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	244		280
FTEs		2		2
Social & Restorative Justice	\$	445		540
FTEs		4		4
Ministries in Canada	\$	1,028	\$	1,251
FTEs		4		4
Volunteer Services	\$	253	\$	246
FTEs		3		3
Network/Healthy Church	\$	381	\$	265
FTEs		1		1
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,663	\$	4,754
Total Program Service FTEs		24		24
% of Total \$		99.0%		97.9%
% of Total FTEs		96.0%		96.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	10	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	37	\$	102
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		47		102
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		1.0%		2.1%
% of Total FTEs		4.0%		4.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	4,710	\$	4,856
TOTAL FTEs		25		25

**Synodical Administrative Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2012				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 4,893	-	189	-	5,082
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,579	-	-	-	1,579
Inventory	235	-	-	-	235
Prepays & Advances	37	-	-	-	37
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	22,616	-	-	-	22,616
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	9,370	-	-	-	9,370
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	38,730	-	189	-	38,919
Accounts Payable	6,078	-	-	-	6,078
Notes/Loans Payable	22,569	-	-	-	22,569
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	28,647	-	-	-	28,647
Net Assets	\$ 10,083	-	189	-	10,272
Footnotes:					
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: \$47,000 of Lilly SPE2 grant, \$61,000 of AOYC and \$81,000 other.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Synodical Administrative Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,265	\$	3,337
% of Total Income		82.3%		82.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	22	\$	24
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		22		24
% of Total Income		0.6%		0.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	680	\$	672
Total Other Income		680		672
% of Total Income		17.1%		16.7%
TOTAL INCOME		3,967		4,033
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	1,420	\$	2,883
FTEs		5		5
Communications	\$	505	\$	547
FTEs		3		3
CRC Plan	\$	8	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Sea to Sea payout	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Leadership Programs	\$	197	\$	174
FTEs		1		1
Total Program Service \$				
	\$	2,130	\$	3,604
Total Program Service FTEs				
		9		9
% of Total \$				
		57.7%		71.9%
% of Total FTEs				
		60.0%		60.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	943	\$	993
FTEs		4		4
D.D.M.	\$	219	\$	188
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$	402	\$	228
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		1,564		1,409
Total Support Service FTEs		6		6
% of Total \$				
		42.3%		28.1%
% of Total FTEs				
		40.0%		40.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	3,694	\$	5,013
TOTAL FTEs		15		15
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	273	\$	(980)

Synodical Administrative Services (Agency Services)
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual	Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	- \$	-
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	3,765 \$	3,956
Grants	\$	- \$	-
Services & Misc	\$	5,680 \$	5,885
Total Other Income		9,445	9,841
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		9,445	9,841
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Advancement	\$	701 \$	702
FTEs		9	9
Finance & Payroll	\$	2,042 \$	2,093
FTEs		23	23
IT and Phones	\$	1,314 \$	1,351
FTEs		9	9
Human Resources	\$	315 \$	314
FTEs		3	3
Coordinated Services	\$	261 \$	244
FTEs		2	2
Proservices	\$	3,693 \$	4,007
FTEs		15	15
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,326 \$	8,711
Total Program Service FTEs		61	61
% of Total \$		88.2%	88.5%
% of Total FTEs		95.3%	95.3%
Support Services:			
Management & General			
FTEs			
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	1,119 \$	1,130
FTEs		3	3
Fund-raising (Foundation)			
FTEs			
Total Support Service \$		1,119	1,130
Total Support Service FTEs		3	3
% of Total \$		11.8%	11.5%
% of Total FTEs		4.7%	4.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,445 \$	9,841
TOTAL FTEs		64	64
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	- \$	-

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

	June 30, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,753	491	553	-	2,797
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	425	425
Receivables & Advances	150	6	2	-	158
Inventory	20	-	-	-	20
Prepays & Advances	533	-	-	-	533
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	366	798	225	385	1,774
Equities	366	798	225	385	1,774
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	483	-	-	-	483
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,671	2,093	1,005	1,195	7,964
Accounts Payable	1,019	197	-	-	1,216
Notes/Loans Payable	33	-	-	-	33
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	172	-	-	-	172
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,285	-	-	-	1,285
Total Liabilities	2,509	197	-	-	2,706
Net Assets	\$ 1,162	1,896	1,005	1,195	5,258
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Board Designated Reserve \$1,500 - Legacy fund \$99 - Endowment/annuities \$165 - Other \$132				
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 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,982	\$	4,946
% of Total Income		37.1%		33.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	6,905	\$	7,565
Estate Gifts	\$	653	\$	1,726
Total Gift Income		7,558		9,291
% of Total Income		56.3%		63.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	885	\$	493
Total Other Income		885		493
% of Total Income		6.6%		3.3%
TOTAL INCOME		13,425		14,730
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,602	\$	3,643
FTEs		23		24
Eurasia	\$	2,611	\$	2,966
FTEs		16		17
Latin America	\$	3,968	\$	4,022
FTEs		22		22
Global/other Int'l program	\$	1,154	\$	1,240
FTEs		19		19
Education	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,335	\$	11,871
Total Program Service FTEs		80		82
% of Total \$		84.5%		84.8%
% of Total FTEs		82.5%		82.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	879	\$	1,036
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,196	\$	1,085
FTEs		12		12
Total Support Service \$		2,075		2,121
Total Support Service FTEs		17		17
% of Total \$		15.5%		15.2%
% of Total FTEs		17.5%		17.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	13,410	\$	13,992
TOTAL FTEs		97		99
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	15	\$	738

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

	June 30, 2012				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 3,756	888	10,041	-	14,685
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,123	2,188	-	-	4,311
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	1,177	-	-	-	1,177
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	25	-	-	25
Equities	-	2,775	1,450	23	4,248
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	37	-	-	-	37
PP & E	240	-	112	-	352
Other		-	-	-	-
Total Assets	7,333	5,876	11,603	23	24,835
Accounts Payable	1,702	-	-	-	1,702
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	258	-	-	-	258
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,960	-	-	-	1,960
Net Assets	\$ 5,373	5,876	11,603	23	22,875
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments as stipulated by board = \$4,542; Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$1,334				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$112; Purpose-restricted gifts = \$10,914; 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$577				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23				

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

		Fiscal 10-11 Actual		Fiscal 11-12 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		-		-
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	20,298	\$	20,343
Estate Gifts	\$	1,569	\$	2,524
Total Gift Income		21,867		22,867
% of Total Income		55.4%		51.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	16,892	\$	21,234
Miscellaneous	\$	734	\$	394
Total Other Income		17,626		21,628
% of Total Income		44.6%		48.6%
TOTAL INCOME		39,493		44,495
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	10,287	\$	10,053
FTEs		28		28
North America programs	\$	1,232	\$	1,090
FTEs		9		9
Disaster relief programs	\$	1,384	\$	1,656
FTEs		16		16
Above-budget relief costs	\$	21,617	\$	25,178
FTEs		-		-
Education	\$	1,064	\$	1,074
FTEs		6		6
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$		35,584		39,051
Total Program Service FTEs		59		59
% of Total \$		90.6%		92.2%
% of Total FTEs		78.7%		78.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General		1,737		1,255
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations		-		-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising		1,937		2,030
FTEs		11		11
Total Support Service \$		3,674		3,285
Total Support Service FTEs		16		16
% of Total \$		9.4%		7.8%
% of Total FTEs		21.3%		21.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		39,258		42,336
TOTAL FTEs		75		75
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)		235		2,159

REPORT OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

Introduction

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports appear in alphabetical order by agency, educational institution, or ministry name. Supplementary reports may be provided, if needed, prior to the time 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 wonderful ministry opportunities.

Joel R. Boot
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Introduction

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. BTGMI operates with the following mandate:

The mission of Back to God Ministries International is to lead the church into international witness through media programming and related activities that communicate the Reformed faith in response to the need for conversion, discipleship, and cultural transformation.

Using a variety of tools that effectively communicate the message of God's redemptive work within specific cultural contexts, Back to God Ministries International continues to fulfill its mission—to evangelize and disciple every person within media reach. Building strong local ministry partnerships, our goal is kingdom transformation: every aspect of personal and community life lived under the lordship of our risen and ruling Savior.

II. Ministries of Back to God Ministries International

Through media, Back to God Ministries International proclaims the story of God's unfailing love worldwide. Seeking to be fluent within the cultures where its voice is heard, BTGMI employs ministry leaders who broadcast in their native languages. Each of our media leaders explores ways to collaborate with each other and with local mission partners to increase effective outreach among seekers yearning to believe and believers seeking to grow. We are blessed to work with gifted leaders who provide direction in the production of culturally relevant programs and related ministry for gospel proclamation.

The work of BTGMI is empowered by a vision of building the church by communicating the life-embracing story of God's redemptive work. Operating in ten major world languages, in the past year BTGMI has provided evangelism and discipleship resources to people in 134 countries via radio, television, print and digital media, and phone messaging. Through 34 websites in 10 languages, we reach people in at least 179 countries. During 2012, millions of people interacted with our ministry through avenues such as email, Facebook, letters, phone, websites, and face-to-face contact. Networks of prayer partners in North America and throughout the world pray regularly for those who respond to our media outreach. Staff and more than 800 trained volunteers worldwide offer discipleship, spiritual guidance, and prayer; in addition they help connect seekers to local churches.

A comprehensive website, BackToGod.net, helps the church and individuals engage in our worldwide witness. Web visitors will also find information about BTGMI outreach and links to all ten language ministries.

In June 2012 synod ratified the appointment of Rev. Kurt D. Selles to be the ministry director for Back to God Ministries International. Rev. Selles began his work as director in August 2012.

A. *Arabic ministry*

Back to God Ministries International maintains a cooperative ministry with Words of Hope (the media ministry associated with the Reformed Church in America) and Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) for outreach among Arabic-speaking people. The joint ministry maintains

production studios and discipleship centers in Larnaca, Cyprus; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon. Our partnership with MERF allows BTGMI to pursue broadcasting in the context of holistic mission. (MERF also trains church leaders, supports church plants, and offers relief and diaconal ministries.) MERF director Rev. Victor Atallah provides leadership for the BTGMI Arabic media ministry.

Although civil upheaval in the Middle East continues to plague the region, Rev. Atallah reports that more Muslims have converted to the Christian faith in the past forty years than during the entire fourteen centuries since Islam's advance from western Arabia. According to Rev. Atallah, statistics indicate that the decisive factor behind the growing number of Muslim converts is that more Muslims have access to the gospel through media outreach. BTGMI and its partners are strategically placed to offer evangelism and discipleship resources to those seeking the truth.

Expanding into new communication channels has increased our ability to engage Muslims in conversation about the Christian faith. Our gifted young staff created new segments for radio programs and developed a Facebook page whose audience of primarily Muslims grows daily. Follow-up through text messaging and Skype connections provides a secure way to converse with hundreds of seekers and lead some to faith in Christ.

B. Chinese ministry

China is a vast mission field. Home to nearly one-fourth of the world's population, fewer than 4 percent of China's citizens identify themselves as Christian. BTGMI is committed to using every opportunity and every media tool available to proclaim God's good news with Chinese people.

Under the leadership of Rev. Jimmy Tai-On Lin, the Chinese media team provides programming and discipleship through eight audio programs and six coordinating websites that give people in China access to the gospel. Increasing our web presence in mainland China resulted in more than a million interactions with our Chinese ministry this past year through online resources. Staff respond to specific questions primarily through email, phone, and Skype conversations.

Using a variety of media tools, we are able to reach people who might have no other access to biblical discipleship resources. Through local contacts in mainland China and gospel conferences in Asia we distributed more than 4,000 printed discipleship resources and 3,000 DVDs.

C. English ministry

Rev. Steven Koster gives leadership to ReFrame Media, the English outreach of BTGMI. He and his team produce nine unique ministries designed to reach a growing and diverse audience of all ages and at various steps in their faith journey—in North America and around the world. (See also ReFrame-Media.com.) Churches and individuals are encouraged to use these resources for personal spiritual growth and as tools for outreach.

1. *Today*—daily devotions that provide both evangelistic and discipleship content. BTGMI has produced the *Today* devotional booklet for more than 60 years. We continue to print and distribute 240,000 bimonthly devotional booklets, and we have increased the more cost-effective electronic distribution of *Today* through email, podcast at ThisIsToday.net, Facebook, and RSS

feed. With the launch of *Today* apps for smart phones, *Today* devotions are read by an average of 3.6 million people each month. Churches can place an automatic daily link from ThisIsToday.net on their own websites.

2. *Kids Corner*—an audio program now heard on approximately 440 stations in North America and other countries. KidsCorner.net is a significant outreach to children, who can listen to programs and request music CDs, bookmarks, and other kid-friendly disciple-making tools. A special section on the website offers resources to help parents with their children's spiritual growth. Families and church education leaders are encouraged to send for information about our children's Bible study correspondence program, a tool for helping children become lifelong disciples of Jesus.
3. *Spotlight*—a simplified English program that uses a limited vocabulary, basic grammar, and a slower speaking pace to reach an international audience of those who wish to learn the English language. BTGMI partners with Words of Hope and HCJB Global in the production of *Spotlight*. In addition to radio broadcasting, listeners increasingly are connecting to the program through the website SpotlightRadio.net. Several areas of significant traffic occur in southeast Asia, Latin America, and eastern Europe. We have established more than 56 *Spotlight* English Clubs in 16 countries, plus two clubs that meet through Skype. Churches with a heart for reaching out to international neighbors may contact rbasselin@crcna.org for information about establishing a *Spotlight* English Club. We offer practical tools to help teach English language learners, serving as a bridge for interacting with immigrants in their local communities.
4. *Walk the Way*—a daily one-minute audio and companion video conversation that challenges people to explore how God matters to our walk of faith. This program is designed to engage younger adults in thinking through the implications and claims of the gospel of Christ. *Walk the Way* is broadcast on more than 1,000 media outlets throughout North America. Its Facebook page has more than 23,000 fans, which has resulted in a significant increase in visits to the website WalkTheWay.net.
5. *Groundwork*—a half-hour audio program that proclaims the Christian faith, produced in collaboration with Words of Hope (RCA). *Groundwork* explores Scripture in depth from a Reformed perspective. In January 2013, CRC pastor Rev. Scott Hoezee joined the team as cohost along with Rev. David Bast from Words of Hope. An interactive website, GroundworkOnline.com, and a Facebook page for listeners invite comments and prayer requests. *Groundwork* is aired on 70 radio stations in 16 countries and can be heard via podcast on its website.
6. *Family Fire*—a Facebook-based ministry to strengthen families, launched in 2011. Instructional and inspirational posts and conversations lead people to FamilyFire.com, a website that provides resources to explore God's design for marriage, parenting, and other relationships. The *Family Fire* team also offers retreats and teaching events.
7. *Think Christian*—a collaborative blog that seeks to engage people in conversations about the intersection of the Christian faith and culture. A team of writers posts articles to guide a discussion that helps visitors "think

Christian” from a Reformed perspective in their daily lives. The website ThinkChristian.net receives an average of 7,400 comments each month from people engaged in issues such as world events, the church, science, art, and more.

8. *Church Juice*—a web-based ministry to connect with congregational media volunteers. The goal of this ministry is to empower local churches to use media effectively to minister within their congregation and to reach out to their communities. *Church Juice* staff led two webinars, as well as five workshops for pastors and church leaders in Canada and the United States, including one workshop offered over Skype. For information about how *Church Juice* can assist your congregation, visit ChurchJuice.com.
9. *Under the Radar*—a music-based program that combines the best “undiscovered” and underplayed music from Christian artists, along with interviews and stories. Those who visit RadarRadio.net are linked to our other discipleship programs. *Under the Radar* airs on more than 200 broadcast outlets, often providing free air time for our other programs. Stations welcome the program because it provides a unique niche in Christian programming. Its Facebook page has more than 22,000 fans, many of whom actively carry on conversations about the impact of this program on their lives.

D. *French ministry*

Our French ministry takes place mainly in Africa and Haiti, but it also reaches parts of Europe where the population includes French-speaking immigrants from Africa. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gives leadership to this ministry along with a team of indigenous staff members and hundreds of international volunteers. Joining Rev. 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.

Working with local churches in Africa over the past ten years, we have provided discipleship for at least 100,000 people who have participated in our Bible study correspondence program and more than 22,500 individuals have received leadership training. In July we engaged a Haitian pastor to give leadership to outreach in Haiti in the French language as well as Creole, the “heart” language of most Haitian people. Working in our international ministry center in Brazil, Rev. Mpindi recorded several video programs that are being piloted on TV stations in strategic African cities. A new Facebook page, which offers links to the audio messages, is gaining traction among listeners and their friends.

E. *Ministry in Hindi and related languages*

Back to God Ministries International partners with Words of Hope and Good Books Ministries in northern India and the Himalayan region. Under the leadership of Mr. Stephen Paul, broadcasts in the Hindi language are translated into three local languages, reaching remote villages and places that are closed to the gospel. Because of threats against the ministry team in Kashmir, production in that region has been temporarily suspended. Prayers are requested for our team and for Christians in that area.

In spite of political and religious fundamentalists who oppose the spread of the gospel in northern India and surrounding regions, our producers and discipleship teams in these areas see a great hunger and thirst for God's Word. Our Hindi ministry celebrated the conversion and baptism of twenty-two believers in one Hindu stronghold. As the ministry teams visited listeners and seekers in the border areas of northern India, people eagerly asked for our program guides, Bibles, and Christian literature.

Through our partnerships in India we are able to distribute Bible study correspondence materials and produce a family magazine with daily devotions to help disciple listeners who contact our media mission teams. Several house-groups have formed as a result of our outreach in northern India. Listeners meet to discuss our programs and to pray for each other and for their seeker friends. Join them in praying that God will use this ministry to bring many people into his kingdom.

F. Indonesian ministry

BTGMI Indonesian ministry is a vibrant, multifaceted media outreach making an impact throughout this vast island nation. Working in partnership with the Indonesian Christian Church and several CRC and RCA-related mission agencies, we are expanding outreach in tribal languages, conducting training events, and developing listener communities.

Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya leads a team that produces six radio programs that are also translated into seven tribal languages. We also produce two television programs, an active Internet ministry, and five bimonthly devotional booklets targeting different age groups—including a significant outreach to children. Nearly 900 participants are enrolled in our Bible study correspondence course. Rev. Untung and his wife, Ivany, led several training workshops to equip leaders in Indonesian churches to launch Global Coffee Break (a Bible study ministry developed by CRC Home Missions, World Missions, Faith Alive, and BTGMI) in the Indonesian language.

In partnership with Words of Hope we hired a young man who initially came to faith through media ministry. Under his leadership we are expanding outreach in tribal languages in order to more effectively reach people in remote regions.

G. Japanese ministry

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the Japanese media ministry. All seven audio programs are broadcast on the Internet and by cell phone delivery. Highly advanced mobile device technology provided more than 1.2 million audio or text downloads of our Japanese evangelism and discipleship resources. The Japanese ministry has developed and hosts an active social networking website that allows Internet users to engage with staff in online conversations. Several annual events are held to allow isolated listeners to gather for face-to-face encouragement and Bible instruction.

Following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, an increasing number of people sought out spiritual direction by surfing the Internet. Our Japanese website became a gate through which people found hope and a path to meet the Savior. Radio, especially in disaster-stricken northern Japan, continues to be an avenue through which people hear our gospel messages. We partner with the Reformed Church in Japan to provide special programming for people seeking answers to life in the wake of the disaster.

We continue to look for additional ways to partner with the Reformed Church in Japan in outreach to the people of Japan. Our media ministry is opening doors for advancing the gospel and making an impact in Japan.

H. Portuguese ministry

Ministry leader Rev. Hernandes Lopes brings a wealth of theological and media experience to our Portuguese outreach. He continues to host the TV program *Verdade e Vida* (*Truth and Life*) whose audience draws more than 2.5 million viewers each week. In addition to providing leadership for BTGMI radio, television, telephone, print, and Internet ministry in Brazil, Rev. Lopes is a frequent speaker at national and denominational evangelical conferences. These events help strengthen the ministry partnership with churches in Brazil.

We continue to work with local churches in order to increase the number of congregations that use our *Disquepaz* phone ministry for outreach in their communities. Churches also partner with us to distribute a special Christmas/Advent devotional booklet; in 2012 we distributed 913,000 copies to families who might not otherwise hear the biblical Christmas message. Our ministry center in Campinas is used by local churches for developing new broadcasts. BTGMI French, Russian, and Spanish ministry leaders have also used the recording facilities to produce new programming in their languages.

Building on the success of our Christmas devotional booklet, BTGMI produced new devotional booklets with special themes, including one for families. We are also developing several new video programs for television and web broadcasting. We are encouraged by the number of viewers who write to inform us that through our ministry they committed their lives to Christ.

I. Russian ministry

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin gives leadership to the Russian media ministry. Rev. Sosedkin divides his time between North America and Russia, where he is able to engage in live radio broadcasting as well as personal contact with listeners who respond to this ministry. The Russian ministry carries out substantial outreach with a relatively small staff, including a program specifically designed to reach atheists and nonbelievers. In addition to radio broadcasting and live call-in programs, Internet blogs, and print media, staff developed a growing text message outreach that enables subscribers to receive devotional messages and encouragement to read the Bible or connect with a local church.

Rev. Sosedkin and his Russian staff have also established an excellent working relationship with St. Petersburg Christian University, often conducting classes there on the effective use of media in church settings. We continue to partner with a Christian blogger who writes for our Russian website, reaching a younger audience with the gospel's transforming message. Responses to the ministry blogs on our website have increased.

This past year we worked with partners in Ukraine to produce short video blogs available on DVD and online. These videos have been effective in engaging younger people in conversations about faith and life.

J. Spanish ministry

For nearly 50 years we have had a tremendous opportunity to make an impact throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Under the leadership of Rev. Guillermo Serrano, our Spanish team continues to develop a multimedia strategy for sharing the gospel with as many people as possible. We proclaim the gospel through new and long-standing radio and television programs, reaching people in Central and South America as well as Spain and other countries with significant Latino populations. This past year, in partnership with Radio Moody, Rev. Serrano helped develop a broadcast strategy for reaching Spanish-speaking immigrants north of the Mexican border. This resulted in new programming that provides 24/7 Christian broadcasts—including BTGMI Spanish programs.

Printed discipleship materials are also a significant tool for sharing God's Word. We produce and distribute *Cada Día*, a daily devotional guide available online and in print. We also produced a new two-minute video program, *En Perspectiva (Perspectives)*, for web and television distribution. BTGMI Spanish media programs are produced and distributed from the ministry center in Campinas, Brazil. Work is in progress to translate into Spanish the popular *Kids Corner* audio program (produced by BTGMI English staff), with a target launch date of summer 2013. Staff and volunteers in five countries provide local follow-up and discipleship with those who respond to our ministry.

Our Spanish team continues to lead media seminars that help grow relationships between our staff and Latin American media outlets. These seminars open doors for expanding the number of stations that carry our programs without charging the usual broadcast fees.

K. Korean ministry

Back to God Ministries International continues to partner with the Korean Council of CRC churches to produce a bilingual Korean-English *Today*. This *Today* not only nurtures Korean-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church but is also an effective evangelism tool both in North America and beyond. We print 10,000 copies of the devotional, which is also available online at RiverParkChurch-kr.com.

L. Cooperative organizations

Back to God Ministries International global outreach is strengthened through crucial networks of North American and international partners. Our connections reach from Presbyterian churches in Brazil to house churches in China, from Christian churches in Indonesia to evangelical congregations in Russia, from the Church of North India to hundreds of trained pastors and lay-leaders who serve as mentors in Africa. Strong collaborations create effective partnerships for mission and allow resources to be invested wisely. Organizations with whom BTGMI works cooperatively include the following:

- Christian Reformed World Missions—joint ministry in Haiti and Japan; plus collaborative ministries in Indonesia, Mexico, and El Salvador; initial conversations have begun to explore possible collaboration with CRWM in China.
- Korean Council—publication of Korean-English *Today* devotions.

- Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed congregations—media outreach assistance for new church plants as well as established congregations seeking to use electronic media for ministry.
- BTGMI, Faith Alive, Christian Reformed World Missions, and Christian Reformed Home Missions all work in Global Coffee Break outreach.
- World Renew—diaconal training for Listener Community leaders in Indonesia; plus Sous Espwa follow-up ministry in Haiti.
- CRC ministries such as Calvin Theological Seminary, Pastor-Church Relations, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Timothy Leadership Training Institute, and CRC Communications.
- CRC Proservices and RBC Ministries—publication of selected materials.
- Words of Hope—partnership in the production of two English programs: *Spotlight* and *Groundwork*; additional partnerships in Indonesian, Hindi, and Arabic ministries.
- HCJB Global—partnership in *Spotlight* production.
- Middle East Reformed Fellowship—media outreach to the Arabic-speaking world.
- Reformed denominations worldwide—major joint-ministry partnerships in Japan (Reformed Church in Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church).
- Crossroad Bible Institute—discipleship ministry through a Bible study correspondence program.
- Christian universities in Russia and Brazil.

III. The Back to God Ministries International board

A. Function

Back to God Ministries International 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 board officers of BTGMI are Rev. Bruce Persenaire, president; Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, vice president; Mrs. Cindi Veenstra, secretary; and Mr. Harry Boessenkoel, treasurer.

C. Board member nominees

Rev. Calvin J. Aardsma (Region 9) is completing a first term on the board and is eligible for reappointment. The board recommends that synod ratify Rev. Aardsma for a second three-year term.

The following slates of nominees from geographical regions were presented in the spring of 2013 to the respective classes for a vote. Synod will be asked to ratify the results of the elections.

Region 4

Rev. Gregory A. Fluit, a pastor at Smithville (Ont.) CRC, has served as a representative for the historical committee with Classis Niagara. He is presently serving as chair for Brock University campus ministry.

Rev. Everett J. Vander Horst, pastor at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario, has served on the B.C. North-West classical interim committee and on the Grand Rapids East classical home missions committee. He is presently serving on the classical home missions committee for Classis Hamilton.

Region 6

Mrs. Julie Lamsma, a member of Immanuel CRC in Ripon, California, is a part-time bus driver and a volunteer youth leader. She has served as treasurer for the MOMS club in Ripon from June 2010 until June 2011. Mrs. Lamsma is presently serving on the Immanuel CRC worship committee, the youth ministry team, and the worship leadership team. She also assists with the technology and photography for her church's Facebook page and website.

Mrs. Alison Libolt Renkema, a member of First CRC, Visalia, California, is a homemaker and does freelance Spanish/English translation work. She has a Masters of Arts in Worship from Calvin Theological Seminary. Mrs. Libolt Renkema is presently on the women's retreat committee and the church worship planning committee, and she recently completed a three-year term on the church worship committee. In addition, she and her husband served as missionaries in the Dominican Republic for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Region 8

Mr. Leland Vanderaa, a member of Bethel CRC in Edgerton, Minnesota, teaches Bible and is a counselor at Southwest Minnesota Christian High School. He previously served two terms on the Christian Reformed World Missions board. In addition, Mr. Vanderaa has served four years on the Heartland conference board, doing teacher conference planning. He has served one term as a deacon and four terms as an elder, twice as clerk and twice as president.

Mr. Dennis Kroll, a member of Bethel CRC in Edgerton, Minnesota, is a Swine Technician with Pipestone Systems. He has served as a partner missionary with Christian Reformed World Missions, working with the English Language Institute in China. Mr. Kroll has served on the church worship committee and on the alumni board at Dordt College. He is presently serving as president for Southwest Minnesota Christian High School.

The BTGMI board presents the following single nominee for appointment as an at-large member to a first term:

Mr. Mark Van Beveren, a member of Ancaster (Ont.) CRC, is retired from Redeemer University College. He has served as the board chair at Calvin Christian School in Hamilton, Ontario, on the Shalom Manor Foundation board, on the marketing advisory committee for Christian Stewardship Services, and on the Education City marketing advisory committee for the City of Hamilton. Mr. Van Beveren has also served on the council and was executive committee chair at Ancaster CRC. He is presently serving on the Ancaster CRC Fellowship development committee.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	1st
16	6	1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th
15	1	4th

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Kurt Selles, director of Back to God Ministries International, and Rev. Bruce Persenaire, board president, be given the privilege of the floor when BTGMI matters are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election and reelection of board members from the slates of nominees presented.

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.

Back to God Ministries International
Rev. Kurt D. Selles, director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2012 and February 2013 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Board officers elected at the October meeting for 2012-2013 are Mr. Scott Spoelhof, chair; Ms. Michelle Van Dyke, vice-chair; Mr. Craig Lubben, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary (executive associate to the president); and Dr. Henry DeVries, treasurer (vice president for administration, finance and information services). Ms. Sally Vander Ploeg (director of finance and chief financial officer) took over as treasurer at the time of the February meeting.

II. General college matters

The October 2012 meeting included the appointments of trustees to board standing committees for each division of the college, as well as appointments to the executive committee and to six college governing committees. The meetings included numerous events surrounding the inauguration of Dr. Michael K. Le Roy at 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 20, as the tenth president of Calvin College. Representatives of seventy academic institutions, the CRCNA, the Calvin College faculty, students, college staff, and the broader community participated in the ceremony.

Board president Mr. Scott Spoelhof welcomed President Michael Le Roy and five new trustees to their first board meetings: R. Scott Boot (Kalamazoo, Mich.) and Tom Geelhoed (Grand Rapids, Mich.), representing classical Regions 10 and 11; and three new at-large trustees: Marge Hoozeboom (Holland Mich.), Wendy Hofman (Lansing, Mich.), and Allan Hoekstra (Holland, Mich.).

The plenary sessions included the review of college committee reports and break-out sessions on board finances and the college's goals for the new Calvin Strategic Plan. The board reviewed and discussed the five phases of the strategic plan, which will be ready for completion in late 2013. These planning sessions were most valuable, offering time for trustees to interact in small groups with college leadership to vision, plan, and lay the groundwork for the college's educational and fiscal plans for the future.

The February 2013 meeting was spent conducting eight faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure, hearing committee reports, as well as reports and discussions regarding progress on the college's Strategic Plan and financial matters. The board also attended the annual Faculty Awards Dinner for the presentation of the President's Award for Exemplary Teaching and four additional faculty awards. Mr. Chris Van Spronsen of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA attended the board meetings as an observer.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty interviews

Eight faculty interviews were a joyful highlight of the February 2013 meeting. Seven of them were for reappointment with tenure (see Recommendations) and one for first reappointment.

B. Faculty Awards

Dr. James Bratt, professor of history, was presented the twenty-first 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.

Four additional teaching awards were also presented at the dinner: the Award for Innovative Teaching to Calvin C. Jen, M. Arch., associate professor of business; the Award for Student-Faculty Research to Dr. John L. Ubels, Ph.D., professor of biology; the Award for Community-Based Teaching was presented to the Calvin Nursing Department (all tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty: Adejoke B. Ayoola, Ph.D., M.S.N., Debra A. Bossenbroek, M.S.N., Elizabeth A. [Beth] Byma, M.S.N., Suzan T. Couzens, M.S., Mary Molewyk Doornbos, Ph.D., Cheryl J. Feenstra, Ph.D., Mary E. Flikkema, M.S.N., Jaclynn L. Lubbers, M.S.N., Jesse R. Moes, M.S.N., Renae Boss-Potts, M.S.N., Carol Rossman, D.N.P., Krista L. Sneller, B.S., Gail L. Zandee, M.S.N.). And, the From Every Nation (FEN) Award for Excellence in Teaching was presented to Dr. Pennylyn Dykstra-Pruim, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Germanic Languages.

Visit the Calvin College website for details about the awards: www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/awards/.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees

1. Nominees to a first term from Region 7

Mr. Bryan Kamps resigned from board service due to a move out of the region in the summer of 2012. The position is currently vacant. The board presents the following slate of names to the classes in the region for a vote to name the trustee to be presented to Synod 2013 for ratification:

Mr. Michael K. DenBleyker, B.S. Engineering, Calvin College

Mr. DenBleyker is a registered professional engineer with the states of Arizona and Illinois. He currently serves as project manager for the Arizona Department of Transportation. He is a graduate of Calvin College and an active member of Palm Lane CRC in Scottsdale, Arizona. Mr. DenBleyker has served as a deacon at the Lombard (Ill.) CRC and on the board of the Phoenix Christian School, with two years on the executive committee and as treasurer of the finance committee. He also was co-chair of the Phoenix Christian School building committee. Mr. DenBleyker currently serves Palm Lane CRC on the youth ministries committee and is committed to Christian education at all levels.

Mrs. Shirley Van Heukelem, B.A. Global Studies, Calvin College and University of Denver

Mrs. Van Heukelem has served for seven years in administration as outreach coordinator at First CRC of Denver, Colorado, after working for twenty-five years with her husband to develop a mid-sized construction business. She serves the CRC on the regional GEMS leadership team and

as GEMS conference coordinator, and she has also served as a deacon. Her community involvement includes service as the secretary of Volunteers in Action Foundation Board and as chair of the annual Global Bazaar committee—a fair trade marketplace hosted by First CRC.

2. The Calvin College Board of Trustees recommends the following trustees eligible for a second three-year term:

Dr. Wytse van Dijk (Region 4)

Mr. Daniel Meester (Region 6)

Mrs. Andrea Van Kooten (Region 8)

Rev. Michael Koetje (Region 10)

B. Alumni trustees

Mr. Ralph Luimes concludes his second and final term as alumni trustee in 2012. The Trusteeship Committee has received two names from the Calvin Alumni Association Board, and the Trusteeship Committee will choose and recommend one nominee at the May 2013 board meeting to be elected by Synod 2013.

C. At-large trustees

Rev. Kenneth Choe has resigned from his position as at-large trustee on the board. The Trusteeship Committee will present names to the May board meeting and will forward a nominee for appointment by Synod 2013.

V. Finance

Tuition, room, and board was presented for information at the February meeting and will be approved by the board at its May meeting. These amounts will be reported to synod by way of the supplemental report.

Note: The final 2013-2014 budget will be adopted at the May board meeting when the fall enrollment numbers are more certain.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Scott A. Spoelhof, and to the president of the college, Dr. Michael K. Le Roy, when matters pertaining to education are discussed.

B. That synod ratify the following administrative reappointments to various positions with faculty status (*italics indicate promotion to that rank*):

1. Joel A. Carpenter, Ph.D., director, Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity (three years)
2. Karin Y. Maag, Ph.D., H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies (five years)
3. Leanne Doornbos Nagel, M.A., ESL instructor and academic counselor, Academic Services (four years)
4. James K. Rooks, Ph.D., dean of education, *professor* of education, (three years)
5. Sarah E. TenBroek, M.S.W., counselor, Broene Counseling Center (four years, reduced load)
6. Randall G. Van Dragt, Ph.D., director, Ecosystem Preserve (three years)

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

1. Carolyn E. Anderson, Ph.D., *associate* professor of chemistry
2. David E. Benson, Ph.D., *associate* professor of chemistry and science education
3. Young R. Kim, Ph.D., *associate* professor of history
4. Carolyn L. Rossman, M.S.N., *professor* of nursing
5. Jennifer Hardy Williams, Ph.D., *associate* professor of English
6. Benita Wolters-Fredlund, Ph.D., *associate* professor of music
7. Jane C. Zwart, Ph.D., *associate* professor of English

D. That synod ratify the change in rank for the following faculty: Joel M. P. Navarro, D.M.A., *professor of music*.

E. That synod by way of the ballot elect new members, reappoint for subsequent terms, and ratify the results of elections held in classes for membership on the Calvin College Board of Trustees with terms to begin and end on July 1.

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
Craig Lubben, secretary

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents their report to Synod 2013 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

I. Board of Trustees

The board met in plenary sessions in October 2012 and via conference call in February 2013 with anticipation of a plenary session in May 2013.

The board officers are Rev. Paul De Vries, chair; Rev. Andrew Vander Leek, vice-chair; and Ms. Susan Keesen, secretary.

The board recommends that synod reappoint trustees Rev. Andrew Vander Leek (Region 1), Ms. Wendy Gritter (Region 3), and Dr. Donald Belanus (Region 12), who have completed one term of service and are eligible for a second three-year term.

The board also recommends that synod reappoint trustees Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr. (at-large) and Ms. Susan Keesen (at-large), who have completed one and two terms of service, respectively, and are eligible for an additional three-year term.

Completing their terms on the board are Rev. Timothy D. De Jong (Region 10), as a result of his move from Region 10, and Ms. Jinny Bult DeJong (at-large), who recently became chief financial and operating officer of Calvin Theological Seminary. We are grateful for their years of service to the seminary.

The following nominees were submitted to classes in Region 10 for voting at the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be presented for ratification to Synod 2013.

Region 10

Rev. Jaclyn Guikema Busch received her M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and currently serves as pastor of the McBain (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church. She has previously served as a missions mobilizer for Christian Reformed World Missions. Rev. Guikema Busch has had ministry experience at Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and has served as the pastoral advisor to the board of Northern Michigan Christian School.

Ms. Paula Triezenberg graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1998 with an M.A. in educational ministry. She is presently an ordained commissioned pastor at the South Bend (Ind.) CRC, serving in this position for the past seven years. Prior to this role Ms. Triezenberg served South Bend CRC for six years as an unordained ministry staff member and for thirteen years as an elder. She also has local ministry experience as a Young Life committee member and as a leadership team member for "The Deeper Journey" program.

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Rev. Jul Medenblik, president; Ms. Jinny Bult DeJong, chief financial and operating officer; Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra, dean of academic programs, and Dr. Lyle D. Bierma, dean of the faculty. Dr. Feenstra also serves as the director of the Ph.D. program;

Rev. Al Gelder as the director of mentored ministries; Mr. Robert Knoor as director of development; Rev. Jeff Sajdak as dean of students; and Ms. Sarah Chun as associate dean of students.

At the time of the writing of this report, Calvin Theological Seminary is in a search process for an academic dean and associate academic dean, who would take over the functions currently performed by the dean of academic programs, dean of the faculty, and director of assessment.

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 be central to 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.

This year the seminary Board of Trustees will address the reappointment of Dr. Mary Vanden Berg as associate professor of systematic theology for two years.

The board has also moved forward with the appointment of Rev. Kevin Adams, Dr. Peter Kang, and Rev. Ronald Vander Griend as ministry partner professors for two-year terms as part of the unfolding work of the Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal. These appointments are adjunct appointments.

At the time of this writing, the seminary community has been involved in an Old Testament professor search prompted by Professor Carl Bosma's announcement that he intends to retire as professor of Old Testament at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year.

IV. Program highlights

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has been involved in the training and teaching of students for ministry for 136 years. And yet, the fall of 2012 was historic because the seminary welcomed its inaugural Distance Master of Divinity degree cohort. Fourteen students began in this five-year program, which allows students to remain where they are and still receive a CTS education through mentoring, cohorts, and distance classroom experiences. The launch of the distance M.Div. has created a great deal of interest in CTS. The winter of 2013 brought an additional thirteen students into the distance M.Div. program.

This program launch is the direct result of a gift of \$1.5 million for distance education at CTS. As a result, we added Rev. Peter Choi as director of distance education and Mr. Nathan Bierma as educational technologist. We invite continued prayers for students, the program, and the opportunity to serve the church in this manner. Besides the Facing Your Future program (which just completed its fourteenth year), we are asking churches to provide an offering for our distance education program to help meet anticipated demand.

The seminary was blessed with a number of key appointments during this past year of transition. We give thanks for the following new persons at Calvin Theological Seminary: Stephanie Brooks (admissions coordinator),

Sarah Chun (associate dean of students), Michael Goheen (professor of missiology), Deb Johnson (accounting clerk), Sara Krosschell (accountant), Cindy Kuipers (development associate), Stan Mast (adjunct professor of preaching), Denise Mokma (academic office administrative assistant), and Jeff Sajdak (dean of students). In addition to these persons, CTS welcomed Rev. Albert Strydhorst as the Lee S. Huizenga Distinguished Missionary-in-Residence as he provides insight from his nearly two decades serving Christian Reformed World Missions in Nigeria.

The seminary has also been blessed to see the continued formation of a new institute. Just as the Center for Excellence in Preaching continues to serve the church in providing preaching resources, CTS formed an Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal (IGCPR), led by Professor Carl Bosma, which has already been a catalyst for conversations related to church planting and renewal. This past January, the IGCPR hosted Dr. Harry Reeder in an in-depth presentation of “From Embers to Flames.”

The following data for to the Center for Excellence in Preaching compares the first full year of visits, pages viewed, and unique visitors in 2006 with its most recent year, 2012, demonstrating the growth of this ministry:

Year	Total visits	Total pages viewed	Avg. unique visitors per month
2006	86,411	242,871	5,649
2012	177,361	534,960	9,556

The board of CTS is grateful for strong enrollment numbers this past year, with 111 new students (up from 83 in the previous year), including 42 M.Div. students (29 residential and 13 distance). (This number does not include 32 new Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy students.)

In addition, we are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Fifteen of our 21 Mentored Ministries Group leaders this year are area pastors: Rev. Mike Abma, Rev. Dan Ackerman, Rev. Roze Bruins, Rev. Erika Dekker, Rev. Lynn Barger Elliott, Rev. Donald Klop, Rev. Daniel Mouw, Rev. Allen Petroelje, Rev. William Renkema, Rev. Amy Schenkel, Rev. Henry Schenkel, Rev. David Struyk, Rev. Elizabeth VanderHaagen, Rev. Paula Vander Hoven, and Rev. Gilbert Varela. Also, all M.Div. and MA students have a vocational mentor—another close tie with congregations and ministry leaders.

The January 2013 interim included students traveling to Granite Springs, California, for a J-term course led by Rev. Kevin Adams titled “Gospel Preaching in a Mission Context”; going to Angola Prison in Louisiana for “Ministry to and with Prisoners” with Professor John Rottman; and traveling to Mexico with Professor David Rylaarsdam to study “Christian Theology of the Liturgical Year.” We also welcomed professors from outside of Michigan to our campus to teach courses for students in residence.

The board is grateful to pastors and others for recommending great students for Facing Your Future! This past summer, thirty high school students experienced theological education at CTS and ministry in Austin, Texas; Tualatin, Oregon; and Toronto, Ontario.

In 2012 congregations collected special offerings of over \$109,987 to support Facing Your Future and the Ministry Incentive Plan (a revolving student loan fund). Praise the Lord!

2012 also saw the launch of two special opportunities for giving. One was a planned giving society called the Presidents' Legacy Society, and the other is titled Mission Builders. Both have proven fruitful in raising the level of support for Calvin Theological Seminary—"Called to Serve."

V. Students 2012-2013

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

Christian Reformed students: 151 (51%)

Other Reformed: 15 (5%)

Presbyterian: 61 (21%)

Baptist: 9 (3%)

Other: 58 (20%)

Non-Christian Reformed students: 144 (49%)

Canadian students: 44 (15%)

International students (other than Canadian): 92 (31%)

Programs:

M.Div.: 123

M.A.: 19

M.T.S.: 18

Th.M.: 65

Ph.D.: 33

* EPMC: 39

Male students: 244

Female students: 51

*Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Paul De Vries, chair, and Rev. Jul Medenblik, president, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election and reelection of trustees from the slates of nominees presented.

C. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the Facing Your Future program and Distance Education).

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
Susan Keesen, secretary

I. Introduction

We were studying the gospel of John when Mary began coming to Coffee Break. She thought that the Bible characters in John were like puppets on God's string and she didn't want any part of being a puppet on God's strings. However, she continued to come and continued to read and study Scripture. After months of having her questions and concerns listened to and answered, her heart softened. One morning she popped in and said, "I've stopped fighting. I told Jesus last night, if wants me to be a puppet on his string, I'm ready to be that." She gave her heart and life to Christ. What a tremendous change began to take place in her life. Her husband, who didn't want their children brainwashed in Coffee Break's Story Hour program, began seeing a change in Mary. Mary began taking their children to church. The children began asking Daddy why he wasn't going. It didn't take long before he wanted to study the Bible also. He also gave his life to Christ. He has since then passed away and now is spending eternity in heaven. God worked a miracle in their lives, and we give him all the praise. We were thrilled that God allowed us to be part of that miracle.

Welcome to the life-changing world of which Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) is privileged to be a part. The mandate of Home Missions is "to give leadership to the CRC in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States, drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church." As part of this mandate CRHM is called to "encourage and assist churches, classes, and regions in the work of developing and sustaining missional churches." This kind of support is done in multiple ways, including Coffee Break and the work done being done in the Great Lakes Region and Eastern Canada with the Ridder Initiative. The Ridder Initiative is a two-year process that works with the pastor and a small leadership team of a church to bring mission momentum to a congregation. A pastor who has been part of the Ridder Initiative commented, "We have a tagline in the CRC: *Transforming Lives and Communities Worldwide*. It's a great tagline, and I love the CRC's vision for transformation, pursuit of *shalom*, and integrated world-and-life view. I know that Ridder is a powerful vehicle for discipleship that results in kingdom living."

For many years churches of the CRC have recognized that CRHM is deeply involved as a partner in beginning new churches. New churches present a powerful way to transform lives and communities. One new church that captures this wonderfully is Restore All Ministries (<http://restoreallministries.org/>). Pastor Glen McCarthy is leading Restore All Ministries to rebuild the broken, revive the city, and renew the mind in the south side of Chicago. As we partner with local churches in this effort to plant new churches, we carry out a second aspect of our mandate—namely, to "initiate, support, and guide church planting and development in cooperation with local churches, classes, and regions." From January through December 2012 CRHM participated in the planting of 12 churches and provided partnership funding for 86 churches.

The third aspect of our mandate is one that holds great promise for the future as well as the present. CRHM is called to “initiate, support, and guide educational ministries in cooperation with local churches and classes.” Recently one of our campus ministers shared the story of a young Korean man who came to a Bible study with a chip on his shoulder. He caused such problems that no one wanted him in their group. But through the struggles the young man became a Christ follower. As he left university, he sent the following note:

I cannot find the right words even though I have too many things to say. I always learn, feel, and think back when I see you. I thank you very much for the love you gave. . . . I will always pray that God’s blessing should be with you until the date we will meet God. I will love you during all my life. I thank you for the love you gave.

During 2012 CRHM partnered in starting three new campus ministries and provided partnership funding for 26 campus ministries.

II. Joining God in mission: A new leadership journey for CRHM

CRHM sees that our church and culture are at a critical turning point. In response, we have been involved in a time of discernment and learning. This time has been fruitful as we have looked back at the work that has been done, and we look forward to the place the Spirit is leading us. Following is a summary of this journey and where God is leading us.

A. Opportunities and challenges

God is on the move all around us—in our rapidly changing world, in the disruptions among our congregations and our denomination. At CRHM we believe the Spirit is at work in his church and is calling us to live out his mission. We are grateful that we stand on the shoulders of so many faithful people in the rich heritage of the Christian Reformed family. As we move forward, we do so by bringing with us the best part of our past, stewarding it, and discerning where God is leading us together.

B. All congregations in mission together

In this challenging environment CRHM developed a strategic plan that took effect in 2010. We celebrate the fruits that came from the plan. At the same time in 2013, we recognize that our congregations are facing increasing changes, challenges, and struggles in their neighborhoods and cities. There is a perception that CRHM has little to contribute to local church vitality in the face of these changes and challenges. In the midst of struggling congregations we commit ourselves to collaborate with congregations as they seek their place in God’s mission and plant churches that are vitally involved in that mission. We do this with a renewed sense that we are a community of churches and ministries in mission together.

We make this commitment recognizing that the types of challenges we are facing in our North American context are not easy to address. Dealing with them will require new learning and a change in our priorities, habits, postures, and long-held assumptions. This will also require that denominational agencies work collaboratively to discover our communal place in helping our churches find their place in God’s mission. In pursuing our key work as indicated in the Home Missions mandate above, we look forward to collaborating with congregations, ministries, and partners on this new journey.

C. *Theological grounding*

Home Missions is in the process of addressing its identity and ministry direction as a denominational agency. It is critical to ground our work first in our Reformed theological identity. Theological reflections and conversations on Reformed themes like *covenant*, *kingdom*, and *God's reigning grace* in ordinary life and on "every square inch" from a missiological perspective are part of the ongoing conversations at CRHM. We anticipate collaborative discussions about this critical grounding from other parts of the CRC denominational family.

D. *Home Missions' focus*

We see local congregations—new and existing—and local ministries as the starting point in God's mission. Therefore, CRHM's main focus is collaborating with, being a catalyst for, and giving appropriate missional leadership to local congregations and ministries as they are discovering their God-given expression of transforming lives and communities in their neighborhoods, cities, and the world.

In pursuing this work, the Spirit of God continues to lead CRHM to
... humbly join in *God's mission* in the world.

The mission is never ours, or the church's. It is always God's mission, and we are sent into the world to participate more fully in this mission by bearing witness to the kingdom of God in our midst. To prepare for this, we practice our way into a lifestyle of discernment, using Scripture, prayer, and an engagement with what God is up to around us in his world.

... focus on the *local church*.

CRHM is committed to the understanding that the local church—new and established—and local ministries are the primary location of God's redemptive work in bringing a life of flourishing to their neighborhoods, cities, and the world. Because of this belief CRHM seeks to fully join with them to discover together how God's Spirit is calling and equipping them to be sent into mission within the world.

... live as a *community in mission together*.

Deep in our roots as God's people is our identity as a community in mission together. Living as this community means serving and being served, loving and being loved, caring and being cared for, and carrying out both local and global mission together. We can't imagine not being part of a community of congregations, classes, and other partners who do this mission together.

... work in *collaboration with* others.

To collaborate means that we are deeply involved with others around God's mission. CRHM is deeply committed to sharing with others in shaping new things for the gospel. We understand that we are being invited into places where we can work together in God's mission, bringing our experiences and practices together in more effective and faithful ministry.

... practice being a *learning organization*.

A learning community seeks to openly engage the changes that are happening in the world, intentionally learning from these experiences through focusing on God's redemptive work in the midst of a fallen world. Being a learning community means that we are continually on a journey of discovery, learning from and with many partners, while sharing with them what we have learned.

III. Ministries of Christian Reformed Home Missions

A. *Major foci*

1. Church planting and renewal

- a. The Church Planting and Development Leadership Team (CPDLT) catalyzes and cultivates gospel movement leaders. The CPDLT works with regions, classes, churches, and other partners to carry out this mission in North America.

This work is pursued by a focus on four areas that are dubbed the "4 E's":

- Engage—communicate vision and attract participants to the mission
- Equip—train and resource [participants] to successfully carry out the mission
- Empower—enable participants to sustain the mission
- Expand—increase size, scope, and impact of the mission

Central to the work of the CPDLT is the forming of clusters. Clusters are gatherings of local churches that pursue God's mission together. Presently there are about forty clusters working to bring the good news to their communities.

Learn more about CPDLT at http://www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_newchurches.cfm. Like us on Facebook to connect to latest happenings and blog posts at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/CRC-Church-Planting-Development-Team/200833693324578?fref=ts>.

b. Renewal

- 1) Working through mission-focused church partnerships, Home Missions provides encouragement to pastors as part of learning communities; leadership to congregations as they discern God's leading for the future; support for classical leadership groups; and access to ministry networks. Learn more about CRHM's renewal work at http://www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_missionfocussed.cfm.

2) Healthy Church Index

The healthy church process was designed as part of the Christian Reformed Home Missions commitment to assist established churches in strengthening their ministry. With the assistance of a trained coach, the process is carried out over a six- to nine-month period. The results of the Healthy Church Survey are shared with the leaders and members of the church in a way that is intended to engage and encourage, through use of a series of congrega-

tional conversations and workshops. This process helps to define the current reality of a congregation and to lay a foundation for good planning for a new future in ministry. A large majority of the twenty-five congregations that have completed the process report high satisfaction and appreciation for the process.

3) Classical renewal

The classis coach encourages and assists classes in the CRCNA to take a look at their own work and functioning, and to develop new visions and plans for increased ministry effectiveness. Approximately one-third of the classes have done some major rethinking and revision of their purpose, direction, and structure. This typically results in more efficiency in governance; more time for learning, worship, and ministry; and greater accountability for the work of the classis. The office of classis coach will be incorporated into the strategy and structure of Home Missions in the coming year.

2. Ethnic Ministry Council

We live in a rapidly changing environment. A large part of this change is ethnic diversity—CRHM’s Ethnic Ministry Council reflects our commitment to work with many different ethnic groups so that the whole gospel is brought into multiple contexts. Home Missions’ four ethnic leaders provide valuable leadership in championing this biblical vision. They also lead in recruiting, training, and deploying new ethnic leaders. To learn more about the Ethnic Ministry Council, see http://www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_ethnicministry.cfm.

3. Discipleship

Congregations in mission are made up of growing, mission-shaped disciples. Home Missions resources congregational discipleship leaders, including Coffee Break leadership, through coaching, networking, and shared learning. This approach is not one-size-fits-all but respects the context and calling of every church. We walk alongside and encourage local leaders as they cultivate environments for growth and mission. To learn more about CRHM and discipleship, see http://www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_smallgroups.cfm.

4. Campus ministries

Denominational campus ministries are at the gateways of leadership. These ministries call university and college students—our future leaders—to consider God’s mission in their own pursuits and to seek the nurture of Christ’s church. They work with faculty, staff, and students to pursue God’s mission in the academic world and beyond.

Campus ministry activities pursue this work through weekly Bible studies for students and faculty; one-on-one counseling; 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. Campus churches exist at both the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin.

In addition to financial support, campus ministries are supported and resourced in other ways such as visioning, coaching, and leadership. A current list of campus ministry locations and a list of the personnel

serving in those locations can be found at www.crccampusministry.org. For resources and support for developing campus ministries or for further information about CRC Campus Ministries, please contact campusministry@crcna.org.

Mr. Albert Wu, campus minister at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, British Columbia, shares what CRC Campus Ministry looks like. “I work out of an office in the corner of campus. In this river of students, God has brought many opportunities to grow his kingdom on campus. Being a long-term presence on campus, I’m able to develop relationships with students, faculty, and staff of all religions and backgrounds.

“For example, a student walked in my office overflowing with questions about Jesus. As our dialogue progressed, she asked, ‘Why do you believe in Jesus?’ I was able to share my testimony and reason for my faith. We prayed, and then she said, ‘I think I should start going to church.’

“Another student with little interest in Christianity dropped by in the midst of a Bible study and said, ‘I don’t know much, but I can learn.’ A Muslim student, who often drops by for conversation and prayer, came one day looking worn out. As we got deeper into conversation, he surprised me by disclosing some of the family issues that are stressing him. I said a short prayer, and he was extremely grateful.

“God is doing something here, and it’s exciting to be a part of it.”

5. Regional ministry teams

Home Missions’ regional teams touch congregations, both new and established, in many ways. From wisdom on bringing renewal, to ideas on planting a new church, to bringing resources for pastors and congregations, to a timely cup of coffee, regional teams help renew and start churches.

The seven regional teams in Canada and the United States are led by regional leaders. These leaders provide focus, resourcing, and wisdom to their teams and to their region. You can find out more about our regional teams and leaders at http://www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_ministryteams.cfm.

New City Church, Kansas: A Wiccan Comes to Church—In Kansas City’s urban Waldo neighborhood, ministry is all about who you know. New City Church and Pastor Ryan Pelton serve this neighborhood and reach out to its people, including Jeremy, a former Wiccan who now attends with his wife and five children.

With support from Pathway Community Church and Home Missions, New City’s first service was held in September 2010. Today the church serves 130 adults and five children. “We’ve baptized about a dozen people,” says Pelton. “I’m excited because it’s happening through relationships, through praying for people and sharing the gospel.”

6. Advancement

a. Looking ahead

Home Missions is working through forward-thinking strategies to ensure strong, sustained support through congregations (ministry shares and offerings) and individuals. The important work of clarifying

and communicating where God is leading us as an agency are essential steps as the advancement department does its work. We recognize local churches and individuals are increasingly looking for more visible, tangible ministry connections, and we are providing these opportunities through a new program called MISSION: Possible (check out Mission Possible at http://www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_missionpossible.cfm). We also know more needs to be done. We are providing a unified communications message and using mail, social media (like us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Christian-Reformed-Home-Missions/26756322317?fref=ts>), the web, videos, and face-to-face to bring this message. CRHM is combining this message with expanded ways of serving new and existing churches and ministries. Central to our message is that in participating together in God's mission we can accomplish more than pursuing his mission on our own.

b. Finances

In 2012 Home Missions' revenues from ministry share rose 2.24 percent (\$83,000) totaling \$3,792,000. Above-ministry share gifts from church offerings increased slightly to just under 1 percent (\$6,000). Individual offerings grew by 51 percent (\$351,000). The result of these gifts combined led to 131 percent growth (\$1,755,000) over the previous year, for which Home Missions is extremely grateful.

This major increase is something that Home Missions did not expect; nor can it be a benchmark to define our future expected revenues. For example, four large gifts from individuals resulted in \$400,000, of which more than \$200,000 were one-time gifts. Estate gifts, normally budgeted for \$300,000, experienced significant growth due to several unexpected large bequests, resulting in a 470 percent increase (\$1,213,000). And thanks to a church multiplication grant of \$467,000 (one-time gift), important revenues were received to specifically expand church growth strategies and implementation. Had it not been for these combined gifts, the financial picture would have been much different, which is what Home Missions is mindful of today.

Home Missions invites you to explore the many ministries that began with Home Mission's funding. Here are a few web addresses where you can explore the life and ministry of just a few CRHM-funded ministries:

McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont. – Mike Fallon, pastor:
re-creation.ca/

University of British Columbia, Okanagan, B.C. – Sam Gutierrez,
pastor: wellspringubco.com/index.html

Crosstowne, Milton, Ont. – John Bouwers, pastor: crosstowne.org/
Roots, D.C., Washington, D.C. – Bryan Berghoef, pastor: rootsdc.org

Restore All Ministries, Chicago, Ill. – Glen McCarthy, pastor:
restoreallministries.org/

Creekside Community, Boulder, Colo. – Adie Johnson and Doug
Kennedy, pastors: bouldercreekside.org

RE:new, Corvallis, Ore. – Josh VanTil, pastor: renewcorvallis.com/

Christ Church of Davis, Davis, Calif. – Eric Dirksen, pastor:
christchurchdavis.org

IV. Collaborative efforts

A. Calvin Theological Seminary

CRHM partners with Calvin Theological Seminary in church planting and renewal. Through jointly sponsored renewal events and projects we are working to bring a missional focus to churches. Through ongoing conversations we are learning from each other strengths in planting and renewal and using those strengths to carry out our mandates.

B. Church Multiplication Initiative and Kingdom Enterprise Zones

The Church Multiplication Initiative (www.cmi21.com) is a joint work of the CRCNA and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Working from a generous grant, we are expanding the Reformed witness in North America. The work focuses on the establishment of Kingdom Enterprise Zones (KEZ). These zones are set up in different areas of the country. They focus on creating a sustainable church multiplication movement. Presently there are 10 KEZs in North America.

Potential New KEZ in Chicago: More than thirty CRC and RCA leaders met in Chicago on December 3 to explore the potential of becoming an apprentice Kingdom Enterprise Zone (KEZ). The leaders explored vision and values as well as the structure and function of a KEZ and how it would work in their context. They looked at MissionInsite demographic data for the Chicago area. (MissionInsite is a service that provides location-specific data along with tools and resources to support churches in planning and mission strategy implementation.) They also spent time praying together and coming up with possible collaborative projects for a Chicago KEZ.

"It all goes back to last September's Movement Day in New York," says Peter Kelder, Central U.S. team leader for CRHM. "Several team members went to Movement Day and became excited about this idea." Movement Day is a national event that gathers Christian leaders who are passionate about transforming urban areas with the gospel.

"We see several advantages to becoming an apprentice zone," says Kelder. "First of all, it really gives momentum to church planting. Second, it would bring greater awareness of who our partners are." He says that if the CRC and RCA work together on church multiplication in Chicago, they'll accomplish far more than they could separately.

C. Mission Montreal

Mission Montreal is a CRC contribution toward a growing gospel movement in Montreal, Quebec. Mission Montreal is bringing together multiple partners, including Christian Reformed World Missions and Diaconal Ministries Canada to reach out to a city that has less than 3 percent church attendance.

D. Global Coffee Break

Home Missions is also engaged in a partnership with other agencies in a Global Coffee Break movement. Significant interest is being shown in various countries around the world for this method of Bible study as a key form of discipleship in their context.

E. Denominational Prayer Summit

CRHM is privileged to be part of working with local churches and all the agencies in bringing this event together. This is a truly collaborative, unifying event.

V. Recruitment and training

A. Campus ministry leadership and professional development

Thanks to the generosity of the Kenneth and Jean Baker Emerging Leaders Scholarship Fund, Home Missions offers the Emerging Leaders program, a key strategy for developing new leaders for the church. This year, through this program, twelve student leaders received part-time funding to actively assist in leadership activities for a campus ministry.

In addition, through working with the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, 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.

B. Church planting leaders

CRHM provides assessment of possible church planters to help them discern God's call in their lives. We also provide training for new church planters through the joint RCA/CRC *THRIVE!* program. One of the ongoing means of training are Leadership Development Networks (LDNs) that help diverse leaders gain ministry skills for their role in the local church. There are also a number of regional initiatives in training.

Leadership Training: Southern California Training Program – Moreno Valley

Phil was a cop, and Leevale was a convict—but both are on the same side now, serving Christ as pastors trained through the Evangelist Training Program (ETP).

ETP's three-year program trains evangelistic leaders like Phil and Leevale and is geared toward people who have jobs and families. The program has been in existence since 1996, and over 100 people have participated in the training. More than 10 new churches have been planted by graduates.

"[There are] a lot of people groups here who need to be reached. The Evangelist Training Program is a great vehicle to reach them," says Pastor Alan Breems.

VI. Board matters

A. Board membership

The Board of Home Missions is mandated by synod to guide and carry out the domestic mission of the CRCNA. The board includes twelve regionally based members (matching CRCNA regions), with the primary functions of governance and strategic direction. Several at-large members balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy and non-clergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Three board members are completing their first term and are eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term: Rev. Daniel Brink (Region 6), and Mr. Allan Kramer (at-large). In addition, Pastor Don Muilenberg (Region 8) has resigned from the board due to health reasons.

The following nominees are presented for election as members at-large to the board of Christian Reformed Home Missions:

Ms. Jenna Huitink grew up in northwestern Iowa but has lived in Scottsdale, Arizona, for the past few years and has been an active member at Phoenix (Ariz.) CRC for two years. Her passions are teaching and serving, and she has been blessed with opportunities to share those passions through teaching elementary school for the past six years. Ms. Huitink currently is a stay-at-home mom and is actively leading a dynamic outreach program at her church, including mobilizing the church community into the greater Phoenix community with Feed My Starving Children and home rehabilitation.

Mr. John Hwang is part of the launch team of Living Water CRC, a multi-cultural/multigenerational emerging church plant in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is the founder of Lanio, a product company with the mission to bring disruptive technologies to markets. He is focused on building two products: Inspire—metrics for churches and nonprofit; and Goodberry.net—a Bible study and media resources lending library for churches. Mr. Hwang is also cofounder and former CEO of Mutually Human, an expert custom software strategy and design consultancy specializing in mobile and web-based products and services. He has a passion for starting companies, and building and organizing systems that successfully solve real problems in the community. He previously served on the team of the Leadership Exchange. Originally from South Korea, he is a graduate of Calvin College.

Mr. Ricardo Tavaréz is currently a Calvin Theological Seminary student and serves on the Emerging Leadership Cohort Team with the Christian Community Development Association. He is an active member of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he serves as director of outreach. Mr. Tavaréz is a graduate of Kuyper College in Bible/theology and international business/marketing. He enjoys working as a leadership trainer, mentor, workshop facilitator, youth ministry leader, and community organizer.

Ms. Sara De Moor lives in Thornhill, Ontario, and participated in the University of Toronto CRC campus ministry as an emerging leader (a program funded through Home Missions). She is currently engaged on a part-time basis while also working in an Anglican church—giving valuable insight into the strengths and challenges of different Christian denominations. Ms. De Moor brings gifts of building relationships, organization and administration, discernment, and working in ecumenical settings.

The following slate of nominees from the respective regions were submitted to the classes for vote, and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a three-year term.

Region 12

Ms. Ruth Kuder of Wayne, New Jersey, currently serves as international student director and high school vice principal at Eastern Christian Schools. She has served on the boards or leadership teams of Mustard Seed School in

Hoboken, New Jersey, and of Restore CRC, a church plant in North Haledon, New Jersey. Ms. Kuder will complete her MS in educational leadership from the University of Scranton, Pennsylvania, in June 2013. Currently her membership is at Cedar Hill CRC, but she is in the process of transferring her membership to Restore CRC in North Haledon.

Dr. Peter Steensma from Newfoundland, New Jersey, serves as president of JARTEC LLC, a communications and electronic warfare consulting group. He is a member of Cedar Hill CRC in Wyckoff, New Jersey. Dr. Steensma has previously served on the Calvin Theological Seminary board; the Eastern Christian School Association in North Haledon, New Jersey; and various government and community organizations. He currently serves on the board at New City Kids and Church in Jersey City, and is president of council at Cedar Hill CRC. Dr. Steensma is a graduate of Calvin College, Princeton University, and Polytechnic University.

B. Board officers for 2012-2013

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Dr. Beth Fylstra, president; Pastor Don Muilenburg, vice-president; Mrs. Shashi De Haan, secretary; Mr. David Harlow, treasurer; and Pastor James Jones, vice-all.

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	1st
15	12	1st, 2nd, and 3rd

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Beth Fylstra, board president; and Rev. Moses Chung, Home Missions director, when matters pertaining to Christian Reformed Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint at-large members from the nominees presented and 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
Moses Chung, director

I. Introduction

On June 18, 1888, synod appointed a small committee to lead the Christian Reformed Church in cross-cultural missions. Outreach to Native Americans was part of this mandate from 1888 to 1964. In 1920, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) began reaching out on the CRC's behalf in countries around the world, seeing remarkable results. In Nigeria alone, CRWM's work spurred three denominations that are now more than twice the size of the CRC in North America. CRWM has proclaimed the gospel, planted churches, trained leaders, and seen communities re-center toward Christ in dozens of countries. Over the past ten years, CRWM has continued in these efforts while connecting with mature local partners in various ministry areas to more effectively extend Christ's reign worldwide.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed World Missions

A. Ministry that by God's grace and power is transforming lives and communities worldwide

For 125 years Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) has been helping Christian Reformed churches to fulfill the Great Commission. Today CRWM has more than 200 missionaries serving in over 40 countries, and through partnerships our work extends to more than 50 countries. We focus our efforts around the world:

- multiplying believers and churches
- equipping and connecting leaders
- reaching teachers and students with a biblical worldview
- strengthening churches and organizations

We give thanks for what the Lord has accomplished through CRWM missionaries and look forward to what he will bring about in the future. Following are some highlights from the past year:

- The Spirit moved more than 14,000 people to commit their lives to Christ through the work of CRWM missionaries and partners.
- Nearly 1,150 new worshipping communities were established.
- Over 27,000 people participated in CRWM-related leadership training programs.
- Over 200 local ministry leaders were partially supported through CRWM grants to partner organizations.
- Twenty-two new missionaries were appointed by CRWM and served in countries such as Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia.
- Eighty-one teachers and administrators served in international schools through CRWM.
- A total of 289 volunteers served through CRWM in various countries.

B. Ministry to and with local congregations

CRWM recognizes that much of the international mission work of the CRC happens through other agencies and directly by congregations. The Missions Education and Engagement Team helps Christian Reformed congregations understand and engage in international missions. The Salaam

Project is a new initiative to help congregations reach out to Muslims in their own communities. Through resources, educational events, and consultation, the team assists local church leaders in stimulating a deeper vision and involvement in missions. A description of their services and many of the resources are available on their website: www.crwmm.org/meet.

C. Collaborative efforts

CRWM works with other ministries of the Christian Reformed Church to extend and expand the impact of our ministries beyond the sum of our individual efforts. A few examples of such efforts include

- working with Christian Reformed Home Missions, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Back to God Ministries International on a *global* expansion of the long-standing Coffee Break ministry of Home Missions and Faith Alive.
- transformation networks—Christian Reformed World Missions has teamed up with Christian Reformed Home Missions and local organizations in Montreal, Quebec, to begin a transformational movement focused on Christ-centered renewal in the city.
- the Salaam Project, through which CRWM works with Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and World Renew to encourage CRC churches and individuals on ministering to Muslims in North America.
- ministry in Egypt—CRWM and the Office of Social Justice are exploring ministry possibilities in Egypt.
- formation of a joint leadership team with Home Missions to nurture a joint vision and coordinated strategy with a shared global missions focus.

CRWM also works with the Timothy Leadership Training Institute to strengthen church leaders who have received little formal training. Through these efforts, biblically trained leaders are being further equipped to serve their congregations and new believers. This type of collaboration results in more effective and longer lasting ministry.

D. Recognition of service

Each year, World Missions recognizes missionary employees and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In December 2012, World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the Lord through World Missions:

Years of service	Name	Location
5 years	Ana Pellecer	Latin America, adm. asst.; Florida
	Troy and Faith Bierma	Bangladesh, Nepal
	James and Barbarita Lee	Mexico
	Michael and Megan Ribbens	Nigeria
	Idella Winfield	CRWRC, church secretary; CRWM in Grand Rapids office
10 years	Elizabeth Busuttill	Burlington, Ontario, office
	Nalini Van Den Bosch	Calvin College, Grand Rapids office
15 years	Tom and Deb de Ruiter	Mali
	Ben and Amy Meyer	Mexico
20 years	Lois Craven	Hungary, Grand Rapids office
	Bob Harris	Philippines
	Al Karsten	Burlington, Ontario, office

25 years	Eugene and Dawn Michelson Ken Schemper Bill Thornburg	Mali Nigeria, Grand Rapids office Nigeria, Grand Rapids office
30 years	Frank and Aria Sawyer George and Ruth Young	Puerto Rico, Honduras, Hungary Japan
35 years	Wayne and Sandy De Young Gary J. Bekker	Honduras, Dominican Republic, Haiti, pastorate, Mexico Philippines, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, pastorate, Calvin Theological Seminary, CRWM director
40 years	Russ and Sherrill Palsrok	Hawaii, pastorate, Nigeria, Philippines, Eur-Asia regional director

E. *Sharing stories*

The following stories show some of the ways in which God has used his servants over the past year.

1. Multiplying believers and churches

a. Latin America: Evangelism in Church's Blood—Dominican Republic

Five years ago, Cándido Herredia joined an Evangelism Explosion training group in Monte Plata, Dominican Republic, eager to learn more about sharing the gospel. There Steve Brauning, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary, and Miguel Joseph, a Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic (CRCDR) pastor, shared pointers on church planting and evangelism. Inspired, Herredia began practicing what he heard.

Herredia started sharing his faith with coworkers on the palm oil plantation in Jobo Grande, a rural town outside of Monte Plata. Several of his coworkers and their families became Christians through his witness. They, in turn, began sharing their faith with others.

Within four years, the small fellowship group they started became an established church community of nearly fifty members. They bought property and built a church. Church members started being trained to lead discipleship groups. And all the while, people continued to spread the gospel, planting three churches in nearby communities. "You could say that evangelism is in the church's DNA," says Steve Brauning.

In many rural areas, the CRCDR is declining in tandem with the sugar cane industry. However, it is a different story in Jobo Grande and the Dominican Republic's urban areas. "Urban churches are springing up and growing like crazy," says Steve. "And in Jobo Grande, the palm oil industry still provides enough jobs to keep the population stable in the region. But it's more than demographics at work in Jobo Grande—it's the Holy Spirit at work in his people."

b. Europe: Genuine Faith in Christ—Ukraine

For many Orthodox Christians in Ukraine, Christianity is about maintaining certain traditions. This was all that two sisters, Lyuda Hallay, 27, and Valya Titushkina, 25, knew before attending the Mukachevo Christian Reformed Church.

"We didn't work on Sundays, but we didn't go to church either," say the sisters. Their family only went to church once or twice a year for special holidays—usually Easter.

Then, Lyuda's boyfriend, now her husband, asked her to attend Mukachevo CRC with him. Lyuda soon invited her sister to join them.

The church was completely different from what they knew. They were used to churches being extremely holy places where people spoke softly, acted carefully, and covered their heads. "[In our old tradition] the church equals the building," share the sisters.

Mukachevo CRC, on the other hand, did not even have a building. Moreover, the small congregation sang in its services, something they had never experienced before. They were comfortable with all these differences, but it was the welcome they received that specifically drew them back.

Christian Reformed World Missions missionary George de Vuyst was leading the church at the time. He invited the sisters to attend a Bible study in his family's home. As Lyuda and Valya learned more about Jesus, they realized that following him was a way of life.

Today, the sisters are elders in the church and involved in various church activities. Their parents have started coming to church too.

"Lyuda and Valya's faith has become central to their lives," says George. "Rather than simply conforming to the culture around them, Lyuda and Valya are devoted to God and his church. They give of their time and talents to serve the church and community and care for their neighbors."

2. Equipping and connecting leaders

a. East Africa: Preaching that transforms—Kenya

Five church planters in Kenya are seeing their churches flourish since they began crafting their sermons with tools received and learned through Timothy Leadership Training (TLT). Before participating in TLT, these pastors had little formal training or experience in applying God's Word to life. As a result, their sermons were often surface-level and based on stories unrelated to the text.

The Bible is the only resource many pastors in Africa have for preparing their sermons, notes Mwaya Wa Kitavi. Mwaya, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary, has initiated TLT workshops across Eastern and Southern Africa. He explains that unless pastors know how to "dig deep" into the text, their sermons are often designed to entertain rather than to teach.

TLT's Biblical Teaching module focuses on "vertical preaching." Participants learn to look for what God is doing, study what the text says about the good news, and think about the changes people need to make in response. They then base their sermons on the answers to these questions.

The church planters have latched on to this approach. One church planter, Mary Lodiogole, preached six "vertical sermons" in the six months following the training. She started preparing her sermons beforehand, basing her message on the text, and using other resources to understand it more clearly. She soon noticed that people were staying awake and engaged during her restructured sermons. In addition, over fifteen new people started coming to church.

After they completed the Biblical Teaching training seminar, the pastors who did not already have a study Bible received one. These Bibles have illuminated the Scriptures even more for them. Now they're using the tools they gained through TLT to help others understand what it means to follow Christ.

b. Asia: Mentoring enlivens Filipino pastors and churches—Philippines

Nine years ago, Pastor James Ramos was about to give up being a pastor. He was serving a church in Binmaley, Pangasinan, Philippines, that seemed stagnant at 15 to 20 members. Meanwhile, personal struggles threatened to bury him in regret, denial, bitterness, and depression. Then, he found new life through One Degree Ministries.

Bob Harris, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary, began One Degree Ministries after realizing that small churches like that of Pastor Ramos pointed to a larger problem—an underdeveloped biblical worldview.

"Filipino pastors have been taught or have inherited a gospel that is primarily understood as a series of doctrines or spiritual beliefs," says Bob. "One is judged to be a good Christian or pastor if he or she knows and can systematically line up certain theological ducks in a row." Many Filipino pastors have understood the focus of Christianity as a mandate to act morally while waiting for the return of Christ.

The challenge comes when church leaders make mistakes. Pastors know they've sinned, but they're afraid to admit it because of the gossip and condemnation that may follow. They try to keep up appearances, but cracks emerge, hinting at what lies beneath.

"Because God's nourishing sap of life isn't able to freely flow into us, we begin to dry up and wither. Thus our ministry becomes void of God's enabling power," says Bob.

One Degree Ministries draws small groups of church leaders together to dig deep into God's Word. The leaders pray for each other, confess their sins to one another, and study Scripture together to apply it to their lives. As they draw nearer to God, they recognize that their faith compels them into service for him.

Pastor Ramos has a new outlook on life. His faith has moved him into action in his community. He now works with over 250 government officials in his city on values transformation trainings. Among other things, they've started a scholarship fund for strong students to attend the universities of their choosing.

"When a pastor and his leaders start to understand God's biblical worldview, then amazing things start to occur in their lives, ministries, and local communities," says Bob. "We take no credit for making these things happen. We are not the ones doing them. They are occurring because God is honoring their commitment, their faith, and their prayers."

3. Strengthening churches and organizations

a. Worldwide: Linking to change hearts—Transformational Networks

In September, Christian Reformed World Missions hosted a conference in Nicaragua on developing and strengthening transformational

networks. Over thirty missionaries from CRWM and other organizations attended to learn and share their experiences in networks from Abuja, Nigeria, to Seattle, Washington. CRWM is increasingly building transformational networks with like-minded people and organizations to spur Christ-centered renewal in communities and countries. Since the Nehemiah Center in Nicaragua was one of the first networks, the missionaries met with Nicaragua network participants for hints on strategies in other locations.

The Nehemiah Center starts by training church leaders on a biblical worldview. “We’ve learned that the best way leaders and pastors become open to working outside their church is when they have reached a change in paradigm in their thoughts,” says Daniel Boniche, director of the Nehemiah Center. If the church is “on board,” its constant presence and influence make it the best avenue for beginning community transformation.

Nehemiah Center network members admit the work has not been without challenges. The network includes international and local agencies as well as churches and individuals from Canada, Nicaragua, and the United States. Varied communication methods, cultures, expectations, and priorities are all part of the mix. Everyone has to listen to each other and perhaps put aside personal or organizational wants to more widely reach people for God’s kingdom.

These stories jived with what others have experienced in transformational networks everywhere. As people shared their experiences, common themes emerged: prayer, teaching the biblical worldview, mutual learning and collaboration, and strengthening churches and local leaders for reaching out. Slowly and steadily, people are embracing Christ-centered change in every societal sector through an ever-expanding chain of transformational networks.

b. Asia: New vision fuels church—Japan

Kamifukuoka Church of the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) has always had a vision for spreading the good news through church plants. Now recent worship and fellowship changes have bolstered evangelism efforts within Kamifukuoka Church too.

CRWM missionary Larry Spalink encourages Kamifukuoka Church leaders in their work. Almost a year ago, Larry, Pastor Kumada, and the church’s elders mapped out a new vision for the church that emphasized “joy-filled worship and fellowship that will energize outreach.”

Pastor Kumada has tailored his sermons to share the gospel simply and meaningfully every week. He has also created a prayer book of sorts to aid the congregation in worship.

Most important, the church has made a point of inviting and welcoming visitors. Members are especially encouraged to bring newcomers to the church’s “evangelism Sundays” on the second Sunday of each month. After every morning service, everyone gathers for fellowship and a meal together. This fellowship time enables believers with relatives who do not yet know Jesus to connect with others in similar situations, and it helps their loved ones feel part of the community.

Masako (not her real name) is one person who recently became a Christ-follower after years of visiting Kamifukuoka Church with her brother. A few months ago, she began sensing God pulling on her heart through the sermons. Convicted, she put her trust in Jesus.

God is clearly bringing people to himself through Kamifukuoka Church. With anticipation and excitement, Larry and the members of Kamifukuoka Church continue discerning opportunities for pointing believers and nonbelievers to deeper communion with God.

4. Reaching teachers and students with a biblical worldview

a. Latin America: Tuning in to God—Costa Rica

Mario, an electrical engineer, is active in his church. Over the years he's been pressured by church leaders to leave his job and devote himself to church ministry. In their eyes, specific "church work" serves God more fully than other work. Since studying at Costa Rica's Evangelical University of the Americas (UNELA), however, Mario has had a different perspective.

"Mario began enthusiastically sharing a wider version of service in God's world, with more, not less, reason to rejoice in God and encourage God's church on its way," says Tom Soerens, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary at UNELA. "He sensed liberation and God-centered fulfillment in the purpose and perspective he could start to bring to his work."

Tom teaches a biblical worldview and philosophy course at UNELA. Many of his students have never heard of a biblical worldview perspective before. Like Mario, they've seen the church divide the world into sacred and secular realms.

"What students realize most through this course is how God reveals himself to us and how that plays out in purposeful action and an enriched intellectual framework," says Tom. Faith is not just a mental assent, but a deeply rooted conviction that spurs them into action. While outwardly simplistic, the biblical worldview perspective propels people to view every area of life—jobs, relationships, free time—through faith "lenses."

The more Tom's students study God's Word, the more they see what it means to follow him. "From that point on," says Tom, "far from being tempted to switch off or mute it, they want nothing less than this very integral and powerful brand of biblical wisdom that they are soaking in." With God's Word as their guide, UNELA students are uncovering full life lived in and for Christ.

b. Africa: Discovering the biblical story—Nigeria

Tosin has taught every age group of students in her seven years as a teacher in Abuja, Nigeria. Over the years, she has embraced the biblical worldview perspective, dramatically changing her teaching style to integrate faith into her lessons.

CRWM missionary Sheila Dykstra met Tosin several years ago at a monthly prayer gathering for Christian teachers in Abuja. As CRWM's Education Consultant for West Africa, Sheila mentors teachers, leads

training workshops, and connects with Christian education associations. Tosin is one of the leaders with whom she works.

“For Tosin, learning how to integrate biblical principles has been a process,” says Sheila. It all began when Tosin became uncomfortable with how the science curriculum seemed to separate science from faith. She prayed about it, and God began opening her eyes to correlations between science and faith. Soon afterward she met Sheila, who began mentoring her on integrating faith into her classroom.

The more Tosin learned, the more she recognized that the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration spoke into every area of life. She started framing her science lessons upon these themes. She also began connecting more intentionally with her students.

One day several student leaders in her sixth-grade class came to her for advice. They wanted to involve the whole school in doing something to take care of the environment. “On their own, these students organized, promoted, and mobilized the school in a ‘School Sanitation Day,’ on the premise that God expects us to keep our environment clean,” says Sheila. That is when Tosin knew that the changes she was making were sticking.

Today Tosin is helping her colleagues integrate the biblical worldview perspective into their curriculum. She dreams of one day helping other Nigerian Christian educators develop a biblically based national curriculum.

III. Placement, learning, and care

A. Placement

CRWM’s Placement, Learning, and Care (PLC) department connects members of the CRC with mission opportunities around the world. Currently these opportunities include career appointments, short-term assignments, and positions with partner organizations. Partner missionaries ordinarily are appointed for a term of up to one fiscal year. The appointment may be renewed annually by mutual agreement between the partner missionary and World Missions.

Through our partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, we provide cross-cultural internships for several seminary students each summer. These internships place seminarians alongside our career missionaries and their national ministry partners and provide a valuable learning experience to students with an interest in missions.

We also work with Youth Unlimited (YU) to engage the youth of the CRC in missions. We participate in YU’s biennial convention for high school students, and we work together to promote opportunities for young people.

In previous years CRWM worked closely with ServiceLink in areas of recruitment, placement, and orientation of all volunteers. ServiceLink is still involved in the areas of promotion and referrals, but all the logistics of volunteer management, from the application to the debriefing, are now handled through CRWM’s Volunteer Program Department.

B. Learning

The orientation program for our missionaries has been revamped. To better serve career missionaries, we outsource part of their training to

organizations that specialize in missionary orientation and debriefing. This provides a more professional and comprehensive orientation that better meets the needs of our career missionaries.

CRWM-specific orientation in Grand Rapids for career, volunteer, and partner missionaries has also been updated with a focus on CRWM-specific issues as well as orienting new missionaries to the role of CRWM personnel. Session topics include spiritual self-care/soul care, conflict management, healthy relationships, support-raising and finance, technology and communication, diversity and antiracism, and other topics relevant to cross-cultural living.

C. *Care*

The care component of PLC's ministry includes providing member care resources (opportunities for spiritual direction, retreats, trainings/workshops, crisis counseling, etc.), logistical assistance (travel, visas, car rentals, and many other practical services), as well as pastoral and medical consultancy and support. CRWM maintains eight duplex units in Grand Rapids that are made available to missionaries on home service and other visitors, based upon availability. Pastoral and medical services are mainly provided by retired volunteers with expertise in these areas.

IV. Board matters

A. *CRWM new board nominations*

Region 2

Ms. Cora Rempel and her husband live in Medicine Hat, Alberta, and attend Medicine Hat CRC. Her academic training is in secretarial, Leadership Development Network training for the CRC, and in business courses. She volunteers at her church, and previous committee/board experience is with the classical Home Missions committee, evangelism committee, vision committee, and development of a church plant. She has assisted the deacons in her church from time to time, but at her church no women serve on the council. Currently she is not serving on any boards and is looking to expand her volunteering beyond the local church. Last June, her perspective on missions became more personal when her daughter and family left for the Philippines for midwife training. She is now learning about people outside the boundaries of the United States and Canada.

Mr. Rob Wagenaar is a member of First Christian Reformed Church of Red Deer, Alberta. He currently works as a sales representative for Enercon Water Treatment. He has grown his sales territory over the past eleven years and is very accomplished at customer service. He has served on the council of his church for four terms, one as a deacon and three as an elder, including service as the chair of council. He is also very involved in the youth programs of First CRC, Red Deer, as a mentor, teacher, and leader. In the past he has also served on the local board of CLAC and the local Christian school board in Red Deer. Rob and his wife Sonya were also involved with chaplaincy work on the University of Alberta campus.

Region 6

Rev. Joel Renkema was born and raised the son of CRWM missionaries in Latin America (Honduras and Puerto Rico) until the age of sixteen. Joel is a

fluent Spanish speaker and as a missionary kid is very comfortable crossing back and forth between cultural boundaries. He credits his life as an MK as the vehicle for his calling into ministry. Joel graduated from Calvin College and while doing so led three trips on behalf of CRWM to Cuba and completed a CRWM summer internship teaching English in China. After college Joel graduated from Calvin Seminary in 2006, and he served a term for CRWM in the Dominican Republic (DR) as a theological educator. While in the DR, Joel also worked as a trainer with EdT (Strategy for Transformation, a cooperative effort of CRWM and the Center for Transforming Mission). Joel serves now as the lead pastor for Visalia (Calif.) CRC, one of his supporting churches while on the mission field in the DR. Joel is also a member of the Classis Central California New Church Development Team and of the joint CRC/RCA Central California "Reformed Hispanic Church Planting Movement."

Rev. Elmer Tandayu is married and has three children. Currently he is the founding pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship, a church planted in 2003 in Carson, California. This church is reproducing missional communities as transformational kingdom agents. As a New Church Development Specialist of Classis Greater Los Angeles, he also is a mentor and coach for church planters and provides them resources in the form of ideas, tools, people, and motivations. Rev. Tandayu's past ministry involvement included being the founding pastor and church planter of eight other churches (three in California, five in the United Arab Emirates, and one in the Philippines), being a lead pastor of two congregations whose focus was multiplying leaders to plant more churches; and being an adviser and delegate to synod.

Region 7

Rev. John Eigege is a missionary and church planter from Nigeria. He attended Hillcrest School and Baptist High School, two distinct fruits of the work of various mission agencies in Jos, Nigeria. Rev. Eigege is called by Christian Reformed Home Missions to serve in Houston, Texas, the most internationally diverse city in the United States. He is currently planting Square Inch Houston, a church that will be a network of missional communities, establishing the lordship of Christ in the city and on college and university campuses. He has a bachelor's degree from Calvin College in interdisciplinary studies and a Master of Divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Eigege has served as an intern with the Evangelical Theological Seminary, Cairo, and the Daniel Center, a ministry of CRWM in Abuja, Nigeria.

Rev. Lawrence A. Lobdell, Jr., graduated from Reformed Bible College in 1979 with a BRE degree. While there it was suggested that he attend seminary, so he applied and was accepted at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS). After one year at CTS, he applied for an internship with CRWM and taught for nine months at Benue Bible Institute in Nigeria. After returning to Grand Rapids, he continued studies at CTS. Following graduation, Rev. Lobdell took up teaching at the Reformed Theological College of Nigeria with CRWM. He also attended Fuller Theological Seminary for two quarters while on home service. In 1992 he and his wife concluded their service with CRWM and came back to the United States to seek a call to a church. In 1993 he accepted a call in Harrison, South Dakota. While there he became the CRWM board delegate for Classis Iakota. His service on the board ended

when he accepted a call to Classis Zeeland. He served a church in Coopersville, Michigan, and studied part-time at CTS once again. In 2006 he accepted a call from Orangewood CRC in Phoenix, Arizona.

U.S.A. at-large

Ms. Lisa Thomson is from the Chicago area and is a member of Orland Park CRC. She was raised in the CRC, attended Chicago Christian School, and spent one semester at Calvin College to finish her degree in journalism from Columbia College in Chicago. She is now a stay-at-home mom with a four-year-old daughter and a 20-month-old son. Her work experiences have been with the Crisis Pregnancy Center, the American Cancer Society, the Bright Promise Fund (which supports inner-city Chicago Christian schools), *The Banner* (as a news correspondent), and a graphic design firm. Her passions are for nonprofits, specifically in encouraging stewardship. She also has a passion for issues of social justice—and while she was browsing the CRWM website, “Hope Equals” caught her eye as something she could get excited about. She feels her contribution to the board would be threefold: (1) she will bring a much-needed perspective from her social networking, website, and graphic design experience, (2) she has a passion for mission activism and stewardship by challenging her peers to get involved with CRWM, and (3) as a young person she believes she can bring age diversity to the CRWM board which will better connect us with the younger generation by telling stories of what God is doing and finding ways so that young people can connect.

B. The following nominees are being recommended for ratification to a second three-year term:

Ms. Andrea Bootsma, Canada member at-large; Ms. Lois Ooms, Region 9; and Mr. William Svelmoe, U.S.A. member at-large.

C. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
Level 18	1	4th
Level 17	1	3rd
Level 16	2	2nd and 3rd

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. Derek A. Bouma; the president of World Mission-U.S.A., Rev. Joseph Kamphuis; and the director of World Missions, Dr. Gary J. Bekker, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to CRWM are addressed.

B. That synod elect by way of the ballot those slates of nominees presented for election or for ratification to the board of Christian Reformed 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 to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

D. That synod celebrate Christian Reformed World Missions’ 125 years of ministry in spreading the good news worldwide.

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

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., was established 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. The Board of Directors of the Loan Fund oversees the loan approval process, the determination of loan interest rates, and the setting of Loan Fund policies. The board also establishes interest rates for Investment Certificates sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the CRCNA.

II. Board of directors

Loan Fund board members are eligible to serve for two three-year terms. The terms of Ms. Christina Bouwer and Rev. Chad Steenwyk expire on June 30, 2013. Both are completing their second terms.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Ms. Andrea Karsten (2014), Mr. Thomas Sinke (2014), Mr. Scott Ritsema (2015), and Mr. Jon Swets (2015).

The Board requests that synod appoint two board members from the slates of nominees presented to each serve for a three-year term, renewable for a second term:

Position 1

Ms. Chery De Boer is a member of Prairie Lane CRC, Omaha, Nebraska, where she serves as church treasurer and has previously served as a deacon, as a member of the worship team and the finance committee, and as a Bible study leader. She is currently a member of the Dordt College Board of Trustees, serving on its audit and finance committees. Ms. De Boer is also involved with the AAA Pregnancy Center and Heartland Hope Mission. Ms. De Boer is a graduate of Dordt College and is a certified public accountant with De Boer and Associates, PC, in Omaha.

Mr. Scott A. Smits is a member of Faith CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, where he has served as an elder and deacon, as vice president of council, and as a member of the staff relations, properties, worship, and finance committees. Mr. Smits was a delegate to Synod 2012. He took part in a service team to an orphanage in Honduras for All God's Children. Mr. Smits is a graduate of Calvin College and Webster University and is employed as chief credit officer with Standard Bank and Trust in Hickory Hills, Illinois.

Position 2

Rev. Stanley J. Workman is a member of Oasis Community CRC in Winter Garden, Florida, where he served as interim pastor and senior pastor. He also served as senior pastor of churches in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Olympia, Washington. He has served on the boards of CR World Missions and Home Missions and has served as president of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. Rev. Workman has been active on numerous denominational and classical committees and is president of Bethany Christian Services of Florida. He presently serves on the boards of Christian Services of Orange County, Florida, and Community Mental Health. Rev. Workman is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

Mr. Kenneth J. Stienstra is a member of Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as elder, deacon, council president, and youth group leader, as well as delegate to classis. He is a member of the Calvin College Business Drive committee and has been involved with Habitat for Humanity and Dégagé Ministries. Mr. Stienstra is a graduate of Calvin College and is employed as senior vice president with United Bank of Michigan in Grand Rapids.

III. Financial operations

- A. The Loan Fund is eligible to sell Investment Certificates to investors in twenty-three states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations, provided the costs of state registrations and legal compliance requirements are reasonable.
- B. At the close of the 2012 fiscal year (June 30, 2012), a total of \$24,538,140 in interest-bearing Investment Certificates held by investors were outstanding. Interest rates vary from 1.30 percent to 3.50 percent, with a time-weighted average of 2.47 percent. The variance in interest rates reflects market conditions and the terms of the certificates at the times they were issued.
- C. Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has originated nearly two hundred loans totaling more than \$60 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2012, the Loan Fund had \$22,846,795 in gross loans outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are closely monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2012, there were no impaired loans. The Loan Fund maintains a loan loss reserve to help cover potential losses.
- D. Financial operations are also reflected in the following data:

	2010	2011	2012
Cash and equivalents	\$9,390,298	\$8,579,248	\$9,004,061
Net loans and interest receivable	\$25,214,336	\$23,540,717	\$22,413,193
Total assets	\$34,604,634	\$32,119,965	\$31,417,254
Certificates and interest payable	\$28,384,363	\$25,579,460	\$24,538,140
Net assets	\$6,220,271	\$6,540,505	\$6,879,114
Total liabilities and net assets	\$34,604,634	\$32,119,965	\$31,417,254

- E. A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2012, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2013—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

- Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:
- The sale of Investment Certificates 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 that permits borrowing 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 Mrs. Alice M. Damsteegt, customer service specialist, and Mr. David E. Veen, director.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund's director or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod, by way of the ballot, appoint two members from the slates of nominees to the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
David E. Veen, 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 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 is rapidly changing, and Faith Alive must change if it is to remain a vibrant and relevant ministry to the church and the world.

The choices Faith Alive faces involve much more than adjusting this or that piece of the budget or this or that product line. We are engaging in adaptive change that is not simply an extension of the way things have always been done. This change embodies a new way of doing things. In fiscal 2012 Faith Alive implemented a three-part plan for growth that embodied these key strategic intents:

- Focus on our core competency in Sunday school curriculum.
- Find and develop new sources of revenue through new product development and new imprints, new distribution channels, sublicensing, and global expansion.
- Initiate cost reduction strategies designed to create long-term gains.

We made progress in each area. Last year, in its second year of release we re-focused and re-launched *Dwell*, our newest curriculum, as part of a broad curriculum branding effort, and we supported it with a dedicated outbound telemarketing effort that started earlier than in previous years. As a result, the 2012 curriculum campaign generated more revenue than the prior year, and sales of *Dwell* are exceeding those of the prior year.

In April 2012 we hired a full-time field sales representative to solidify our core church market and help us expand into new channels of distribution. The results are that fiscal 2012 sales ending June 30, 2012, exceeded those of the prior year for the first time since 2006. Faith Alive had seen six consecutive years of revenue decline until this past year. In addition, Faith Alive sales in new channels such as Christian bookstores, Christian book distributors, and online retailers have also grown significantly and are up over 70 percent compared to the prior year. We also hired a *Banner* advertising sales representative to increase what had been a steady decline in print advertising in *The Banner*.

Unfortunately, those revenue producing efforts, while significant, were not enough to provide long-term financial stability, and in November 2012 Faith Alive made the painful decision to reduce staff in order to create a leaner and flatter organization and to reduce costs. Through the elimination of several full- and part-time positions, and by not filling other open positions, Faith Alive reduced its full-time equivalent staff by 18 percent. Most of these reductions will have the greatest impact beginning in fiscal year 2013-14.

Going forward, Faith Alive still faces a critical upcoming twelve to eighteen months, and we have determined that we must achieve two key goals:

- Faith Alive will erase its deficit and secure its financial health by the end of fiscal 2013-14.
- Faith Alive will move from a business-focused publishing model to a ministry-focused faith formation model, moving away from a primarily sales/promotions orientation toward regaining customer support, retention, and development by the end of fiscal 2014-15.

Achieving these goals will be difficult and will require further adaptive strategies. To erase its deficit and begin building cash reserves, Faith Alive will focus on these strategies:

- Several significant new partnerships will be established, cemented with financial backing or revenue-generating agreements.
- New projects must secure financial backing from outside parties or grants.
- Current product lines will be assessed for financial viability and income contribution, removing or finding alternate funding for product lines that are not financially viable.
- Faith Alive will continue to receive additional ministry-share funding at 2013 levels or higher.
- A break-even budget in fiscal 2013-14 must be achieved.

To shift toward a faith formation ministry model, Faith Alive must envision itself in an entirely different and new way—in new wineskins—recasting itself through a fresh vision and principles for what faith formation in local congregations could be.

A. Faith formation ministry

1. Vision

That Faith Alive return to its roots as a faith formation ministry for the CRC, offering leadership, support, and resources for worship, faith formation, and discipleship for congregations. Optimally this new ministry will exist within a larger denominational entity or division of congregational life and mission, embracing congregational mission, leadership development, and support along with faith formation. In adopting this wider role, Faith Alive would provide two interrelated services: faith formation leadership and support, and publication. Each of these aspects will support and resource each other.

2. Principles

As a faith formation agency, Faith Alive would operate on the following key principles:

- Faith formation takes place in families and local church communities. This new faith formation agency must not take over but empower and support the local work in congregations. This requires a strong regional network of support personnel that will work closely with congregations by listening to their needs and communicating those to denominational staff, and by providing training and support to congregations.
- Sturdy faith formation requires a sturdy foundational theology of faith formation that is manifested in a common vocabulary and goals. The common vocabulary and foundational goals are challenged today in a context in which many congregations pay more attention to attractiveness and ease of use than to theological integrity. This new faith formation agency must develop tools that work with congregations to adopt a common theological vocabulary and goals for faith formation.
- This faith formation agency (especially within a larger congregational life and mission entity) must provide support, education, and leadership to congregational faith formation leaders in constructing a congregational ethos and culture that supports a robust faith formation ministry. This will involve helping congregations move away from a “silo” structure to a more intergenerational emphasis.
- In local congregations of the CRC, faith formation is provided/encouraged/supported by a wide range of stakeholders: families, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Christian Reformed Home Missions, GEMS, Cadets, Youth Unlimited, the Young Adult Leadership Taskforce (YALT), the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Christian schools, ordained pastors, youth pastors/workers with a wide variety of training (or lack of training) and worldview backgrounds, and more. A new faith formation ministry must begin to build connecting and coordinating “ligaments” between these various stakeholders, a process that includes growing a common theology/vocabulary of faith formation.

These are major changes—work that Faith Alive cannot do on its own. Making these shifts will require further study and work and the support of other denominational agencies, synod, its appointed committees, and the local church. Work is currently under way to build strategies and transition plans that will move Faith Alive into a larger, broader faith formation and congregational ministry context, but those strategies and plans are still in development as of this writing. Several steps have already been taken, however:

- In its meeting on February 15, 2013, the board of Faith Alive Christian Resources voted to endorse the direction outlined in a February 8, 2013, memo from the administration regarding a faith formation initiative. This memo was first viewed by the board on February 14, and the board devoted its full meeting agenda on February 15 to wrestling with and responding to the initiative. The board spent three hours in careful deliberation, surrounded by prayer. That endorsement was drafted into a memo of response to the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the CRCNA, accompanied by several comments,

questions, and input it believed the Board of Trustees needed to address as it deliberated the creation of a faith formation ministry, the realignment of Faith Alive, and the dissolution of the Faith Alive board.

- In its meeting on February 22, 2013, the BOT also voted to endorse the direction outlined in the February 8, 2013, memo from the administration regarding a faith formation initiative.
- An Implementation Design Team (IDT) has been appointed to serve the administration with recommendations that will realign some of the denominational ministries into a more cohesive whole in support of faith formation. The IDT is mandated to propose a comprehensive plan for realigning the like ministries and functions based on the principle of congruency. The activities and/or ministries that are alike, or seek to address the same audience, will be grouped and formed as teams in support of the faith formation initiative. This team will not only address a realignment of the entities involved but also propose a delivery model that is efficient in its address to the needs of congregations in time to be considered by the BOT at its May 2013 meeting.

B. Our assurance

Thankfully, we do not walk the road alone.

We are assured by this: Faith Alive is called to this time and this place to do God's work within the limits of who we are—both as individuals and as an organization. God asks that we give our very best in the field that we have been given to work. Our call is not to someone else's field, but to our field. And with God's help, we will produce fruit. In the words of the apostle Paul,

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

—2 Corinthians 3:2-3

While significant changes are in the works for Faith Alive, its ministry continues as it has for over 45 years. The following is a summary of the current 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. 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. Reader financial support of the magazine has also remained very high. Annual fundraising efforts in 2012 again met with excellent results despite a relatively lackluster economy in both Canada and the United States. While advertising revenues continue to be lower than in the past, the addition of a part-time marketing person focused on regularly communicating with existing and potential advertisers has begun to make a positive difference.

An independent marketing survey completed in December 2009 revealed that *The Banner* continues to be widely read and enjoys a good relationship with its readers. From the many communications we continue to receive, we believe that such is still the case. In order to verify that, we had hoped to conduct another independent survey last year. However, cutbacks to the budget made us postpone that. We plan to do the survey this year. In the meantime, please do let us know how we are doing.

This year we have continued to enhance our online presence (www.thebanner.org) and to reach more folks through social media as well—Facebook and Twitter. So, for example, we have begun reporting on synod in “real time.”

We have also begun work on creating bilingual “corners” on the website for our ethnic minority communities. We hope to begin featuring articles in Korean, and once we have that in place, we hope to add articles in Spanish and Chinese soon thereafter. These will need to be joint projects in which our ethnic churches would provide the articles and we would translate, edit, and post them online.

We also continue to explore the possibility of enhancing our marketing efforts by offering ad space online, which would allow for more dynamic content, such as videos.

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 for West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. This arrangement continues to work well.

The present editorial staff consists of the following persons:

Robert De Moor, editor (.6 FTE)
Judy Hardy, associate editor (1.0 FTE)
Joyce Kane, editorial assistant (.3 FTE)
Gayla Postma, news editor (.9 FTE)
Kristy Quist, *Tuned In* editor (.25 FTE)
Jonathan Wilson, web editor (.25 FTE)
Karen DeVries, copy editor (as required)

Articles receiving the most reader feedback over the past year were those focused on issues such as global warming, creation and science, and war and peace. Considerable interest was also shown in the U.S. presidential election, and to an invitation in an editorial for folks to recommend ways in which we could take care of the creation without pitching people out of work. We received a lot of replies from readers who took us up on that challenge, some of which we published in our first-ever every household *Banner* theme issue.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For a number of years, synod helped fund *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the CRC Korean Council through a ministry-share allocation to Faith Alive. The purpose of this publication was to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the magazine often included translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*. This support was temporary to help *Voice of the Reformed* eventually become self-supporting. Annual reductions in support were planned over time, with the support eventually becoming \$0. *Voice of the Reformed* did not become self-supporting, and in July 2012 Faith Alive informed the CRC Korean Council that it was ceasing financial support of *Voice of the Reformed*. This coincided with a decision by the CRC Korean Council, at the time unbeknownst to Faith Alive, to cease the periodical's publication. Faith Alive and *Banner* staff are in conversation with the CRC Korean Council on how to incorporate the purpose and intent of *Voice of the Reformed* into other media, such as creating a Korean "corner" of the online *Banner*.

B. Editorial Department

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

1. Curricula

a. For children

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, adult small groups, intergenerational groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of our publishing ministry. As the church continues to change and diversify, that becomes more and more challenging.

The number of new curriculum customers added each year (over 500) continues to equal or fall below the number of dropped customers. Research shows that churches do not stick with the same curricula as long as they once did and that when they switch, they do so for a variety of reasons—but primarily they state "a desire for something new and different" as the main reason for change. Other denominational publishers are experiencing similar trends. This, combined with an increasingly competitive market, continues to be a challenge. We anticipate that growth will come through an expansion of distribution channels (attracting and retaining new customers) and through innovation. It is not enough to create a "new and improved" curriculum. Faith Alive must reinvent curriculum by establishing a new vision of faith formation in the local church.

To meet the changing needs of the church, Faith Alive now offers a variety of curriculum choices for churches. All of them are Reformed, and all of them are excellent pedagogically—but each speaks to the needs of different types of congregations and ministries.

Walk With Me is our oldest current curriculum. First released in 2004, this preschool through eighth-grade curriculum provides a comprehensive scope and sequence for children and youth that will ground

them well in Bible knowledge and church teachings. And it does so in fun, creative ways that speak to the many different ways that children learn. *Walk With Me* was developed by a diverse team of writers and consultants who designed a curriculum that works well for today's churches and families. The curriculum is easy to adapt to a specific congregation's church year; it is rich with variety and choices.

Kid Connection was designed to meet the unique needs of small Sunday schools and midweek programs—and yet it is used by churches of many sizes. This four-year curriculum takes kids through the Bible twice—with two Old Testament years and two New Testament years. It is fun, easy to teach, biblical, great for outreach, and highly relevant for today's kids.

Dwell is a new Sunday school curriculum that gives kids time and space to meet God, marvel at God's redemption plan, and find their own place in God's story. In a high-speed world, *Dwell* provides kids with less noise and more time to experience God. It is a kindergarten through eighth-grade curriculum that offers kids and their leaders opportunities to worship and to wonder into God's story as they live it out together. *Dwell* also invites families to take a more active role in nurturing their children's faith. A devotional guide for middle schoolers called *Dive Devotions* helps young teens grow in faith, connect with God's people, and live out God's story in their lives.

b. For intergenerational groups

We is a new intergenerational ministry resource. The first series, called *The Epic Story*, offers ten events that guide preschoolers through senior citizens through the sweep of God's story from Genesis to Revelation. *We* challenges churches to think about education in a new way. What happens, for example, when people of all ages gather around the same table to learn together? What happens when grandmothers have conversations with teenagers and when four-year-olds talk about their faith with thirty-somethings? What happens when we live into God's story together, following the path of God's mission to renew creation? *We* also includes an at-home faith nurture component that encourages families, couples, and individuals to dig into Scripture, talk together, and "do" together during the week.

Other *We* curriculum titles include *The Unshakeable Promise* (covenant), *Enter the Tabernacle* (how the Old Testament tabernacle points to Jesus), and *Expectations* (Advent). More units are planned for 2013, including one on the Lord's Prayer.

In the coming year our team of editors hopes to develop (and field test) an intergenerational small group curriculum as well.

c. For youth

Faith Alive's youth curricula aim to teach the fundamental doctrines of our church in a way that speaks to today's teens. We publish several resources to support this ministry:

- On the Heidelberg Catechism we offer *Questions Worth Asking*, a two-year course with a cutting-edge pedagogy, and *HC and Me*, a two-year course that incorporates more traditional pedagogy.

- On the Belgic Confession we offer *Believe It*, which explores this important confession in an interactive small group format. We also offer the well-loved video classic *What We Believe*, newly revised in 2012.
- Several short-term courses for youth explore such topics as world religions, worship, and Bible literacy.
- During this past year we introduced a new and innovative Bible study for teens, called *Who, Me?* The new series explores the lives of biblical characters, highlighting God's faithfulness and the extraordinary ways God calls and uses ordinary people, like us, to carry out God's mission in the world.
- We also released *Deep Down Faith*, a renewed version of Cornelius Plantinga's *A Sure Thing* during the past year. The course is now aimed at older teens and should be especially helpful to those preparing for public profession of faith. It is adaptable for individual mentoring, small group study, or classroom use.

d. For people with intellectual disabilities

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 intellectual disabilities. Faith Alive partners with Friendship Ministries by publishing and distributing Friendship resources. The basic curriculum for this program is a three-year curriculum called *Friendship Bible Studies*.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with Pathways International, a ministry in Minneapolis, Faith Alive provides resources 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 a Sunday school training and consulting coordinator. In December 2007 Ms. Jolanda Howe was hired by Faith Alive to facilitate training and support and to encourage networking opportunities among church educators and teachers.

Beginning in 2009 the training focus shifted from regional events to online efforts. Webinars, curriculum blogs, videos, and web meetings now allow us to connect with churches across North America to provide them with convenient and free training and support.

During the past year Ms. Howe also led workshops at a number of conferences and took a major role in leading a one-day children's ministry conference that we hosted in Grand Rapids in September.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, Ms. Howe and the editorial team started a new initiative of intentionally connecting with churches to find out what exciting things they are doing in ministry. That has been a rich and informative experience that will shape future ministry directions for Faith Alive. Because most of our staff live in one area of the country, Ms. Howe would love to form a network of regional representatives—educators who could listen to and consult with local churches

in all parts of the country. That is a possibility she will be pursuing this year.

Ms. Howe is also involved in broader denominational efforts to support Sunday school leaders. She currently serves as the guide for the CRC's Sunday School Network and is engaged in training for coaches, offered through Christian Reformed Home Missions.

2. Adult discipleship

Believing that a growing faith among adults is a key to all faith nurture in the church, Faith Alive has produced an array of practical resources geared to the needs of adult ministry in churches today.

- Bible studies—The Infuse series expanded this year to include titles on the books of Proverbs and the second half of Acts. The Discover Your Bible series added a new study on 2 Samuel and aims to expand the series to include video options by 2014.
- Devotions—To encourage devotional reading and prayer during Advent, we added *Longing for More* by Paul DeVries to our expanding category of family and personal devotions.
- SquareInch—To stimulate adults to engage in the important conversations going on in the church today, we expanded our SquareInch imprint with *Song of a Scientist* by Calvin B. De Witt. Additional SquareInch titles are also in development.
- With the approval of the new joint translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, and with a mandate from the BOT, Faith Alive worked with the RCA and the Presbyterian Church (USA) to create a video-based all-church study of the Heidelberg Catechism. This new study, called *Body & Soul*, is built around an insightful and beautifully written book by Craig Barnes, newly appointed president of Princeton Seminary. Videos also feature Barnes, and the kit includes resources for worship, preaching, and small-group study.

3. Worship resources

- a. *Reformed Worship*: This quarterly journal continues to provide churches with solid resources for their worship planning. There are approximately 2,500 subscribers, many from denominations other than the CRC. Thanks to a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, back issues of the magazine are available to the general public online. The two most recent issues are available online for subscribers only. In 2011 *Reformed Worship* underwent a major redesign to give it a more contemporary look, reach out to younger readers, and refresh the magazine's online presence.
- b. New hymnal: In 2007 synod approved the development of a bi-denominational hymnbook, now titled *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, compiled in cooperation with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The editorial team has now nearly completed their work and looks forward to introducing this rich and varied collection of classic and contemporary songs to both the CRC and RCA synods this June. Over 9,000 copies of this rich new resource for the church have been pre-sold six months before its release.

- c. Psalms resource: In January 2012 we released the largest resource of psalms for worship ever produced in North America. Now in its third printing, *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship*, has met with much acclaim and above-anticipated sales. People from many denominations have discovered the book and are singing from its pages. GIA, a Roman Catholic publisher, has requested that we work with them on an App version of the book, which will enable us to reach and serve an even wider group of churches and individuals in the coming years.
- d. Children and worship: We continue to work with the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church of Canada to coordinate support for the children and worship program used by many of our churches.

C. *World Literature Ministries*

1. Introduction and overview

World Literature Ministries (WLM) publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages—primarily Spanish. The Spanish line of products is published under the imprint Libros Desafío. Libros Desafío has a global reputation for producing high-quality Reformed academic and theological textbooks for churches, colleges, and seminaries in Central and South America. Most of the books are translated from English books on doctrine or biblical studies and are intended for church leaders.

Mr. Jan Dijkman serves as director of WLM, and Rev. Alejandro Pimentel serves as associate editor. Ms. Elizabeth Waterfield continues to serve as marketing manager. Key publishing highlights include the following:

- New children's Bible storybooks and prayer books, two through a new partnership with Lion Publishing:
 - *Esta es mi Biblia*
 - *Viaje por la Biblia*
 - *100 Oraciones Favoritas*
 - *50 Historias Biblicas Favoritas*
- *Mi Primer Libro de Historias de la Biblia*
- *Detective de la Biblia*
- Publication of the Greek course for beginners, *Griego para Sancho* (equivalent to "Greek for Dummies"), written by the dean of the seminary in Medellin (Colombia), has been released and was printed at Buena Semilla in Colombia.
- A book on hermeneutics: *El texto que interpreta el autor*
- A complete Spanish edition of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

In addition, WLM has signed a publishing partnership with Andamio Publishers in Spain. Through this agreement WLM will become the exclusive distributor of Andamio titles in the Americas, giving WLM access to co-publishing series like "The Bible Speaks Today" (editors John Stott and Alec Motyer) in Spanish and co-publishing some new titles. Forthcoming titles co-published with Andamio include

- *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
- *Old Testament Theology* (Bruce Waltke)
- *New Testament Theology*

Andamio's active catalogue has over 100 titles, but their sales are inferior to those of WLM's Libros Desafío line. Most of the titles in their catalog are written by well-known Spanish authors or are Spanish translations of titles from Intervarsity Press.

Through this agreement, WLM has already sold more than 10,000 copies of books into seventeen Latin American countries.

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, all sales efforts, and sales forecasting.

The print catalog remains a key vehicle for communicating with churches about our products, but the web, email, and social media have become important in recent years. As of January 1, 2013, approximately 35 percent of Faith Alive's orders placed in 2012 were via the website www.faithaliveresources.org. From January 2012 through December 2012, the Faith Alive website generated 8,500 orders and \$621,600 in sales, a drop of 16 percent from 2011.

Other communication channels include direct mail, conferences, print and web-based advertising, online video, publicity, order enclosures, retailer promotions, social media, and work with other denominational partners to coordinate mailings.

Faith Alive promotes its curricula to a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. As indicated in the chart below, Faith Alive's publishing ministry is much broader than the Christian Reformed Church. More than one-half of Faith Alive's accounts and sales for English-language products are to non-CRC churches.

Denomination	Active customers	% of total	Sales	% of total
CRC	853	25%	\$1,028,254	46%
RCA	490	14%	316,417	14%
PCUSA	804	24%	282,239	13%
Bookstores/schools distributors	265	8%	345,437	15%
Other	1005	29%	270,580	12%
Total	3,417	100%	\$2,242,927	100%

In April 2012, as a strategy to increase revenue and expand distribution, Faith Alive hired additional sales representation to solidify and increase sales to core church customers and to expand sales into new channels such as retail and online bookstores. These efforts are bearing fruit. Sales through bookstores and other retail outlets increased 86 percent through the first half of fiscal 2013 compared with the same period last year.

Faith Alive's customer service team continues to provide excellent service to our customers. In a recent survey, respondents gave this department a 9.02 rating on a 10-point scale for their service.

E. Personnel

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

The Publishing Leadership Team is a management group made up of the director, Mark Rice, and representatives from the following departments: Judy Hardy, Periodicals (*The Banner*); Leonard Vander Zee and Ruth Vander Hart, Editorial; Jane Hilbrand, Customer Service/Operations; and 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 projects may be 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 its impact on our financial base, the long-term finances of our ministry are strained. Work has been ongoing for several years to increase Faith Alive's revenue stream, but the growth seen from these efforts has not been enough to offset the decline in our core publishing area of curriculum. A new ministry model is needed and is currently being developed under the guidance of Faith Alive, denominational, and Board of Trustees staff.

Faith Alive submits (for synod's information) reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and the budget for fiscal year 2014. These reports have been submitted to the denominational director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2013—Financial and Business Supplement*.

III. 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 Reformed Church in America) elected by synod governs Faith Alive. The board ordinarily meets three times annually in September, February, and April. Each member of the board serves on one of three councils: Administrative, Editorial, or *The Banner*.

While this describes the current board composition, the recommendation to realign several ministries (including Faith Alive) into a faith formation

ministry would necessitate the dissolution of the Faith Alive board as it is currently constituted, with temporary governance assigned to the Board of Trustees until a more permanent governance and oversight solution is developed. As a result of the endorsement of the creation of a new faith formation ministry initiative, both the Faith Alive board and the Board of Trustees agreed to recommend the dissolution of the Faith Alive board, effective June 30, 2013.

B. Officers

The current officers of the Faith Alive board through June 2013 are Ms. Wilma Wiersma, president; Ms. Valerie Walker, vice-president; Dr. David Schuringa, secretary; and Mr. Jay Laninga, treasurer.

C. Nominations of board members

No new delegates are being sought at this time in anticipation of the recommended dissolution of the Faith Alive board.

D. 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 Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church.

Faith Alive staff members have also been heavily involved in the development of the balanced scorecard, which is designed to help implement the Ministry Plan. 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 Ministry Plan, Faith Alive works closely with other CRC agencies and related organizations to assist them in their ministry. Examples of this include the following:

- Faith Alive provides various CRC-developed English-language 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 (CICW) in a number of ways, including the 2012 release of *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship*, co-published with both CICW and Baker Publishing Group. Planned for 2013 is the release of a new bi-denominational hymnal, *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, done in partnership with CICW and the Reformed Church in America.
- *The Banner* regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions.
- Faith Alive is partnering with Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, and Back to God Ministries International on a global initiative for Coffee Break ministries. Faith Alive is the publishing partner with these agencies to plant indigenous Coffee Break ministry groups around the world. Through these efforts this ministry has spread to numerous countries including Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and more.
- Faith Alive provides order fulfillment services for several of the CRC agencies.

E. 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. These are 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 Christian Resources became 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 co-publisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. The PCUSA carries our *Friendship* curriculum and our *Kid Connection* curriculum.
- We work closely with the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators on their annual conference. We also partner with the Association of Christian Reformed Educators.
- 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.
- Cumberland Presbyterian Church (CPC)—The CPC has endorsed Faith Alive's entire line of curriculum, and we are partnering with them to promote our curriculum line and other ministry materials to their entire list of churches.
- Evangelical Order of Presbyterians (ECO)—This relatively new gathering of churches has invited Faith Alive to conduct several workshops at their national gathering and to provide an onsite bookstore. Discussions are planned for Faith Alive to propose forming a publishing partnership with ECO.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM)—Faith Alive has a longstanding and good relationship with DYM. We are a partner with DYM in the Youth Ministry Task Force, and we regularly collaborate on promotional efforts and consult on ministry efforts.
- Baker Books—We periodically co-publish books with this publisher. *Seeking God's Face* (2010) is a co-published title. Others are *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship* (2012) and *The Worship Sourcebook*, Second Edition, released in March 2013.

F. Use of Faith Alive Christian Resources by CRC churches

Many CRC churches make use of the resources offered by Faith Alive. In fact, about 79 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. Approximately 57 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our curricula for children. While that is high compared to many denominations, decreasing loyalty to denominational resources and an increasingly competitive curriculum marketplace have placed pressure on Faith Alive to create innovative, new approaches to curriculum publishing, find ways to retain and expand its customer base, and expand its distribution channels. CRC churches place a high value on

ensuring that their children are being taught from a Reformed perspective, but many are finding other methods to accomplish this by not necessarily using the Reformed curricula Faith Alive offers. At the same time we are encouraged that Faith Alive curricula are being positively received by many CRCs and churches from other denominations as high quality, easy-to-use curricula.

G. *Antiracism*

Faith Alive continues to be an active participant in the effort of the CRC to respond to synod’s directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC. Faith Alive has an antiracism team. Its stated purpose is to provide guidance and accountability to Faith Alive as the agency seeks to better reflect the diversity of the church that it serves. Faith Alive aims to promote understanding, acceptance, and advocacy of the antiracist analysis; to work intentionally to make sure that Faith Alive leadership, staff, and contract help are diverse; and to ensure that the resources produced by Faith Alive are consistent with our vision, and help the church identify and eradicate the causes and effects of racism.

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.”

H. *Salary disclosure*

Faith Alive, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	1	1st
17	1	2nd
17	1	1st
15	1	3rd

IV. **Recommendation**

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

For the board

Dr. David Schuringa, secretary

Mr. Mark Rice, director

For *The Banner*

Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For the Editorial Department

Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, theological editor

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
Mark Rice, director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and employees' retirement plans are governed by the boards of the U.S. and Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed.

A. U.S. Pension Trustees

Mr. Howard Van Mersbergen is completing his first term on the board of U.S. Pension Trustees in 2013 and is eligible for a second three-year term. Concluding service on the U.S. Pension Trustees board is Rev. William G. Vis. The following slate of nominees is presented for election to a renewable three-year term:

Rev. Joel J. Sheeres of Crown Point, Indiana, has been serving the past eleven years as the senior pastor of First CRC of Crown Point. He attended Calvin College and graduated with a major in business administration. After working for several years in retail management, Rev. Sheeres received God's call to the ministry. He attended Calvin Theological Seminary, graduating in 1995. He presently serves as president of the New Leaf Resources Board of Directors. New Leaf Resources is a Christian counseling agency that serves the greater Chicago area.

Rev. Scott A. Vander Ploeg of Port St. Lucie, Florida, is the pastor of Sunlight Community CRC in Port St. Lucie, where he has served for almost nine years. During this time, he has started Sunlight Christian Academy, The Timothy School, and Multiply222 Network. Rev. Vander Ploeg is deeply involved in leadership development and gospel-based discipleship both in Florida and throughout the denomination.

B. Canadian Pension Trustees

Mr. Keith Oosthoek is completing his first term on the board of Canadian Pension Trustees in 2013 and is eligible for a second three-year term. Completing service on the Canadian Pension Trustees board is Mr. Harry Schep. The board recommends the following nominees for election to a renewable three-year term:

Mr. Ariel DeJong, a member of Fleetwood CRC, Surrey, British Columbia, is a partner in the litigation and insurance groups of the firm McCarthy Tétrault, where he has practiced law for twenty-four years. He has served over the years for numerous independent schools, churches, and other charitable organizations. Mr. DeJong currently serves in his tenth year on the board of governors of The King's University College, Edmonton, Alberta, and is serving on its presidential search committee. He currently serves as chair of the board of Surrey Christian School and is a member of its capital campaign committee. He served for twenty years on the board of the Federation of

Independent School Associations for British Columbia and served as a director of the Elim Housing Society, which provides housing to seniors.

Ms. Cynthia Stutski has twenty-five years of experience in the administration of defined contribution and investment-only pension plans as well as approximately twelve years of experience in the day-to-day administration of single premium annuities with Great-West Life Assurance Company of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Ms. Stutski received the Associate Customer Service (ACS - Honours) designation through LOMA Financial Services Education. She has chaired the parent council of Collicutt School for four years and has also served as a Sunday school teacher, Sunday school coordinator, and GEMS counselor and coordinator. Ms. Stutski has been a lifelong member of the Christian Reformed Church and currently attends Covenant CRC in Winnipeg.

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 spouses of participants 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 insurance carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2012, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (generally the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	729	256	985
Ministers receiving benefit payments	599	137	736
Spouses and dependents	155	36	191
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	108	22	130
Total	1,591	451	2,042

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. The U.S. plan is required to have a valuation every three years while the Canadian plan is required to submit an annual valuation to provincial regulators. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified 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 regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plans' last valuation, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$117.3 million for the U.S. plan and \$36.6 million for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2012	December 31, 2011
United States (U.S. \$)	\$93,402,000	\$87,057,000
Canada (Can. \$)	35,011,000	29,977,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While 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:

- 2001 Approved a variety of optional benefit forms in addition to the plan's normal form.

Applied the plan's 1.46 percent multiple to all service beginning January 1, 1985.

- 2003 Approved guidelines for part-time service.

Required payment for upgrading the interests of previously frozen participants reinstated as active members of the plans.

Acted to replace self-insured disability benefits with an insurance contract.

Changed funding protocols for all organized churches, effective January 1, 2004, to require payment of the greater of direct costs or per-member assessments.

Linked timely payment of contributions (the greater of participant or per-member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors of organized churches.

- 2004 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the plan, effective January 1, 2006.

Approved rule VII for synodical procedure, requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised 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.

- 2010 Decreased the multiplier used to determine benefit amounts from 1.46 percent to 1.3 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2011.

Approved a change in the early retirement reduction factor to 0.5 percent from 0.3 percent per month, effective January 1, 2014.

- 2011 Increased the normal retirement from age 65 to age 66.

Advanced the implementation of the change to the early retirement factor (from 0.3% to 0.5% per month) from January 1, 2014, to July 1, 2011.

Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2010 level.

Changed the normal form of retirement benefit from joint and survivor to single life with five years certain. (Participants can still elect to receive a joint and survivor benefit at a slightly reduced level of payment.)

To provide a transition into this benefit form change, a supplemental survivor benefit will be available to participants who retire through 2016.

3. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor’s participation in the plan. The current amount of the assessment for 2013 is \$42.96 per member in Canada and \$37.20 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$9,840 and \$7,704, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational 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 monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

It is anticipated that the above rates will be enough to improve the funding status of the plans as required by the Canadian regulators. While circumstances could change, it is unlikely that there will be a need for further increase in the pension contribution costs for the next several years.

B. *Employees’ retirement plans*

The employees’ retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries

who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. In the United States, contributions are paid to the plan by participating employers in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In both plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal regulation. 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, 2012, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$25,121,000 in the United States and \$3,427,000 in Canada. As of that date, there were 372 participants in the U.S. plan and 79 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	236	71
Inactive	136	8

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Oversight of the denomination’s Consolidated Group Insurance is provided by the Board of Trustees.

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 1,176 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 590 pastors and employees of local churches, 320 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 266 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the United States, a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers’ pension plans and the employees’ retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Board of Pensions and of the U.S. Board of Pensions and to Mr. John H. Bolt when insurance matters and 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 2014 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 by way of the ballot elect one nominee to a first term and reappoint one member to a second three-year term on the U.S. Board of Pensions beginning July 1, 2013.

D. That synod by way of the ballot elect one nominee to a first term and reappoint one member to a second three-year term on the Canadian Board of Pensions beginning July 1, 2013.

Pensions and Insurance
John H. Bolt, director of finance
and administration

I. Introduction

For World Renew (formerly known as the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee) 2012 was a year of firsts! It was the end of our first 50 years of ministry as a development and disaster response organization—a significant milestone celebrated broadly across North America. It was also the first year that we claimed a new name—*World Renew*.

While our name is new, our heart is the same: a heart that God gives us for those who are poor, hungry, marginalized, hopeless, and survivors of human and natural disasters. It's a heart that beats with compassion for people in need because it is the very heart of our God, who loves us and gave himself for us. He is making everything—and everyone—new (Rev. 21:5). His purpose does not change. If you are his follower, this describes your heart as well.

Through the support of individuals and churches from within the Christian Reformed Church and beyond, World Renew has been blessed to be able to take heart-felt action in communities of need for the past 50 years. In total, we have ministered in 87 countries over the past five decades, walking alongside local churches and partners until they have been able to “graduate” into self-sustaining ministries.

Today World Renew is partnering with 75 local churches and organizations in 3,522 communities to reach out to those in need with vital programs in literacy, agriculture, health, income generation, civic education, gender rights, HIV and AIDS prevention, and more. We are also responding to natural disasters, wars, and conflicts in North America and across the globe. This is made possible through the prayers, involvement, financial gifts, and offerings of the people of the Christian Reformed Church.

In addition to its role in the Christian Reformed Church, World Renew is also involved in the international leadership teams of a number of interdenominational Christian alliances to address poverty and disaster. These networks, coalitions, and organizations help multiply CRC resources for greater impact. They include ACCORD, the ACT Alliance, the Alliance to End Hunger, the Canadian Christian Relief and Development Association, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Foods Resource Bank, the Integral Alliance, Micah Challenge-U.S. and -Canada, the Micah Network, and National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. World Renew also is a member of the Barnabas Foundation, Christian Stewardship Services, Canadian Churches in Action, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Christian Community Development Association, Communities First Association, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, InterAction, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, the Ontario Council for International Cooperation, and the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation.

Thank you for joining with World Renew in 2012 and beyond as we follow God's heart of mercy and justice into the slums of Dhaka, the mountains of Guatemala, the deserts of Africa, and the damaged homes of North American disaster survivors. Praise God for those who open their hearts to accept his renewing gift!

World Renew does not receive ministry shares and instead relies on the donations of individuals and church offerings to carry out its ministry. We also rely on your prayers. Please join us in praying for justice in the many places where evil is both pervasive and prevalent. Pray for safety for our staff and volunteers who work around the world, often in situations of insecurity. Pray for our partners as they develop their leadership abilities and resources to move their communities into a better future. And pray for all communities who are in need of experiencing God's heart of love for them. Pray that we may all do what we can to help each other, recognize and develop our gifts, and work together to achieve the potential that God has given us.

II. Ministries of World Renew

A. *International community development*

World Renew's core ministry involves combining the efforts of 3,497 volunteers, 91 staff, 75 partner organizations, and the generosity of thousands of individuals, families, and churches to help transform communities around the world. The result of this outreach is that more than **1.8 million people living with poverty and loss were reached** with World Renew's life-changing programs last year. What an amazing testimony this is to the One who commands us to love our neighbors and care for his children all around the world!

World Renew's community development programs address the needs of people living in poverty by first assessing their assets and then helping them to build on their available resources. World Renew confronts people's greatest needs first—whether those are better health, increased nutrition, good hygiene, improved agricultural practices, literacy, civil rights training, leadership development, savings and loan groups, animal husbandry, or spiritual growth. As people begin to recognize their own capacity to address these issues, World Renew equips them to take on new and greater challenges. Last year, in addition to 940 communities in Indonesia, **World Renew carried out this vital ministry in 3,552 communities worldwide.**

An essential component of this ministry is partnership. In every community where it works, World Renew seeks to come alongside a local church or community organization. It then equips these local leaders to become an enduring presence at the community level and trains them to strengthen their own organizations and carry out effective programs. **Last year, World Renew worked through 75 such partners.** The end result was that the witness of Christ's church was strengthened while entire communities lifted themselves out of poverty.

A great example of this is in Malawi, where World Renew is working with the Nkhoma Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa (NRD) to carry out Village Savings and Loan (VSL) programs. VSL works by encouraging groups of 10-25 people to save together and take out small loans from those savings. Members of the group save through the purchase of "shares" in the group fund. They purchase one to five shares at each meeting and record their shares in their individual passbooks.

As the funds grow, members can borrow up to three times the value of their shares, but they also pay a monthly service charge for the loans they take out. These loans and fees are also recorded in their passbooks.

The loans are disbursed and repaid every four weeks. In this way, the savings and loan money continues to circulate and grow. The best part is that the process is managed entirely by the group members. They set the price that they will charge per share in the fund, and they also agree on an appropriate monthly service charge for the loans. All of the passbooks are saved in a locked box between meetings, and three different members hold keys to three different locks on the box.

After a 36-week cycle, all the outstanding loans are repaid, and the profits from the loan fund are shared out to the members. They can then begin a new cycle.

In 2009 through NRD, World Renew trained four groups of 25 Malawian women in the VSL model. In 2012, there were 68 community groups in that region participating in VSL programs. Another community organization has seen the good work being done by CCAP and has started 12 additional groups. That's 80 groups (or nearly 2,000 people) being reached by the program! In addition, NRD has started 60 more VSL groups in other parts of Malawi.

What's more, when World Renew conducted an evaluation of its work in Malawi, it found that participants in VSL programs were less likely to ask for outside assistance than other groups. Traditional community groups frequently requested more goats, more seeds, more latrines, etc. In contrast, participants in the VSL groups talked about how they had purchased their own seed, bought their own goats, and planned to purchase land as an investment.

"I sell vegetables and use that money to buy shares in my VSL group," said Aliya Black, one participant who has used her VSL group to achieve her family's goals. "From the money I earned, I bought a mattress, a blanket, and school uniforms; and I paid my children's school fees. I used other money to realize a dream I had long cherished—to make improvements to my house. I bought cement to strengthen the outside of my home."

This is just one of many examples of God's everyday work through World Renew and our local church partners that brings about lasting change.

B. HIV and AIDS response

Millions of people around the world have been orphaned by AIDS. Thousands more have been widowed by this disease. In fact, entire generations of adults have been wiped out, leaving grandparents to raise grandchildren and young children to become breadwinners for their siblings. Unfortunately, those living in poverty are the most susceptible to HIV infection and the least able to afford treatment.

As part of its community transformation ministry, World Renew is working to stop the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS around the world. This includes working with our partner churches and organizations to care for orphans and at-risk children, ministering to those who are sick or dying, and educating people about abstinence, behavior change, and faithfulness.

Through your support, more than \$898,000 was invested in HIV and AIDS programs in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda,

and Tanzania last year, so that people whose lives have been affected by this disease could participate in life-changing projects. This included teens and young adults who joined youth groups for support and accountability, men and women who improved their livelihoods through income-generating activities, and families who improved their overall health and nutrition through food security projects. World Renew also worked with churches worldwide to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by people who live with this disease.

C. Church-based community transformation

1. In the United States

The World Renew Connections program links CRC congregations to World Renew's work through church and ministry partnerships, congregational and worship resources, classis delegates, and the Champion Network. In addition, World Renew is a charter member and funding partner of the Communities First Association (CFA), created in 2009 to support community development work in North America by building an asset-based community development movement among CRC and non-CRC churches and organizations. In 2012, CFA contributed to the long-term transformation of 388 impoverished neighborhoods in the United States. CFA also trained and coached 86 Christian Reformed Church staff, as well as 36 other churches, in neighborhood engagement. CFA advanced the capacity of a network of 26 intermediary partners that are active in community transformation.

2. In Canada

World Renew's Connections team links CRC individuals and congregations to World Renew's work. This is supported by the deacons of the Christian Reformed Church and by passionate individuals called "World Renew Champions." Through these committed individuals in Canada and the United States, churches are encouraged to partner with World Renew staff and programs, learn about global poverty and hunger, and support World Renew's ministry with their prayers and financial gifts.

In addition, World Renew-Canada encourages congregations to consider sponsoring refugee families who are newly arrived. World Renew is one of only a handful of refugee sponsorship agreement holders with the Canadian government. Last year, 32 families—a total of 94 individuals—were welcomed to Canada through the work of World Renew.

D. Justice education and advocacy

1. In North America

One of World Renew's ongoing goals is to engage congregations in Bible-based, justice-related activities. The Congregational Justice Mobilization (CJM) program is the response to that goal: it is a fully collaborative effort between World Renew and the CRC Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action. Rev. Kris Van Engen leads the program in the United States and also partners with Mr. Steve VandeHoef, who is funded by the Office of Social Justice, the Committee for Contact with the Government, and the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee to lead the program in Canada. CJM focuses on congregations and campuses. It tracks

involvement at two levels. A basic justice group is a congregation or campus that has engaged in CJM programming between one and three times. An advanced justice group is a congregation or campus that has engaged with the CJM program four or more times. At the conclusion of 2012, there were 140 basic justice groups and 32 advanced justice groups.

2. Around the world

Biblical justice-building is an integral value of World Renew's global ministry as we challenge the systems and structures that keep people in poverty. In 2012 World Renew remained focused on issue-specific programming such as peace-building, land rights, and civic education in areas where conflicts, land-grabbing, or corruption undermine the progress of other community development work. We also helped communities tackle difficult issues such as domestic violence, child labor, and human trafficking. By facilitating discussion about these issues, World Renew can pave the way for individuals and communities to create change in their own lives.

In Nicaragua, World Renew and Christian Reformed World Missions initiated a human trafficking awareness program designed to work through churches. Trainings for church leaders from a variety of denominations were held every other month. During these workshops, themes such as the impact of trafficking, a biblical perspective on human dignity, existing legislation in Nicaragua, as well as how to counsel those who had been victims of human trafficking were addressed. Following the training, the faith leaders returned to their own churches to replicate the workshops with people in their own communities.

A participant in one of the workshops was the sister of a twelve-year-old girl who was enticed by an older man to get on a bus to find a job in a nearby town, but was instead tricked into the dark work of human trafficking. Because of her training, the sister recognized that her sibling's sudden disappearance could mean that she had been trafficked. She notified local authorities and helped them piece together clues about what had happened. In less than a week, her sister was located and returned to her family.

Topics such as human trafficking can be difficult to discuss, but they are also essential to World Renew's ministry in local communities around the world where everyone is encouraged and equipped to better achieve their God-given potential.

E. *Service learning*

World Renew's Global Volunteer Program offers collaborative learning opportunities for individuals with a heart to serve through international internships and long-term volunteer placements. Groups are also engaged through church partnership opportunities, discovery tours, intergenerational church mission teams such as work teams and international disaster response teams, and youth and young adult service opportunities in North America and around the globe.

In a new program called "Serve With A Purpose" or SWAP, youth and young adults interested in exploring international missions begin to plan, learn, grow, and identify opportunities to serve in community development

locally and internationally. The very first SWAP volunteer was placed in her international opportunity this past year.

In addition to this placement, World Renew's Global Volunteer Program matched 351 nondisaster volunteers with opportunities to serve, learn, and grow last year. This included people who volunteered or interned in World Renew's home offices, were part of international work teams, completed an international internship, or participated in church-to-church partnership trips. In total, these volunteers donated 39,299 hours of their time to World Renew's ministry. That is roughly the equivalent of 19 full-time employees for one year.

F. Disaster response

1. International disaster response

In 2011-2012 World Renew responded to a wide range of natural and human disasters, including ongoing responses to major disasters like the East Africa drought, the Pakistan floods, the Japan and Haiti earthquakes, and violence in South Sudan. However, this past year also brought several new disasters. World Renew initiated projects in response to the drought in West Africa, conflict in Syria, and numerous other smaller disasters around Asia and Central America.

World Renew's work spans immediate disaster response (providing emergency food, water, shelter, and access to medical care and counseling) as well as rehabilitation activities such as distributing seeds, tools, and livestock, and providing small loans and training to enhance peoples' livelihoods. These immediate and long-term disaster response activities reached 835,915 people in 32 countries last year.

Throughout **West Africa** a severe drought led to a very poor harvest in early 2012, and subsequent insect infestations, flash flooding, and rising food prices exacerbated food insecurity in the region. World Renew launched an extensive project in Niger, the country most affected by the drought, and reached 44,682 individuals in rural and urban communities with various types of food assistance, including free food distribution, food for sale at a subsidized price, and food in exchange for work on community infrastructure projects. Farmers also received training on new agriculture techniques and were supported with improved seeds and tools.

In 2012, drought conditions in **East Africa** did not improve over those of previous years, affecting millions of families. World Renew continued to work in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia to reduce the impact of ongoing drought by providing food assistance, teaching new farming techniques, providing access to safe drinking water, and training communities in disaster risk reduction to build up their resilience in future disasters. These efforts reached more than 90,000 drought-affected families in Kenya. In Ethiopia, World Renew partnered with Food for the Hungry Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church to provide food assistance to 115,800 people. In Somalia, World Renew took an innovative approach of using vouchers to provide food assistance through a partnership with World Concern to over 5,000 families.

In Haiti, World Renew continued its response to the January 2010 earthquake in the Léogâne area. Construction projects provided 3,425

families with new reinforced homes, including 165 homes built in a mountainous region using a new locally adapted design. Local partners also worked to rebuild livelihoods through agriculture training, animal restocking, and small business training and loans.

In Japan, communities are still recovering from the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit in 2011. World Renew is continuing to assist affected families through psycho-spiritual care and trauma counseling with Christian Reformed World Missions. Two community centers were constructed to support ongoing assistance.

Severe flooding in 2010 and 2011 destroyed homes and livelihoods throughout **Pakistan**. World Renew responded through the Interfaith League Against Poverty to meet the most urgent needs and to help families rebuild their livelihoods. Over 70,000 Pakistanis were supported with food, water, agriculture projects, veterinary training, animal restocking, and construction of reinforced homes, wells, and latrines.

In July 2011 **South Sudan** became the newest country in the world, and thousands of displaced families began to return to the lush Yei River region with peace in mind. However, lack of agricultural skills and resources led to severe food insecurity for many returnees. World Renew is providing urgent food assistance along with access to tools, seeds, and agricultural training to over 6,700 individuals. Farther north, World Renew completed a third year of food security and nutrition programming with 48,000 people in the Darfur region of Sudan.

World Renew is also continuing to promote food security in several communities in **southern Africa**, including training in conservation farming in Mozambique, building grain banks in Malawi, and providing seeds and agricultural training in Zambia.

In Asia, World Renew responded to storms, floods, an earthquake, and famine in the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, India, and Sri Lanka. Interventions included food distributions, rebuilding and repairing homes and schools, and provision of seeds and other resources to rebuild livelihoods. World Renew also conducted Disaster Risk Reduction training in Cambodia and Indonesia and supported the construction of an embankment in Myanmar to reduce the risk of future disasters in that area.

In Central America, World Renew responded to flooding caused by a major tropical storm in late 2011 by distributing food and water, and providing medical assistance to affected families in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. A three-year food security project is also ongoing in Nicaragua.

A key alliance in World Renew's International Disaster Response programs is the 15-member Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). Last year, CFGB reached more than 2.1 million people through 116 projects with an investment of nearly \$43 million. This includes food assistance, food security, and nutrition projects.

Another crucial component of World Renew's International Disaster Response efforts is our team of 26 volunteer International Relief Managers (IRMs) who come from churches across North America and selflessly devote their time to managing some of World Renew's disaster response initiatives. During 2011-2012, eighteen IRMs gave 14,840 hours of their

time to respond to emergencies in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, and Pakistan. Their work is equivalent to seven full-time employees for one year. In January 2012 one IRM couple was honored by the Government of Canada with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee award for their twelve years of service responding to international disasters through World Renew.

2. Disaster Response Services (North America)

World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) has been responding to disasters across North America. Each year thousands of volunteers, from middle-schoolers to seniors, spend weeks and months serving as Jesus' hands and feet at disaster sites across the continent. We are grateful to each of the many volunteers and supporters who have given their time, talents, and finances to make this work possible for four decades. In the 2011-12 ministry year, more than 3,100 people volunteered with World Renew as part of the DRS ministry. Combined, they gave 241,340 hours of their time to World Renew. That is roughly the equivalent of 116 full-time employees for one year.

DRS engages volunteers in several ways, including rapid response, needs assessment, and construction estimating. In rapid response, volunteers are ready to go on short notice and do hard, dirty work. Last year DRS sent out two rapid response teams made up of seventeen individuals. DRS volunteers involved in needs assessment interview survivors, listening to their experiences, taking note of their hopes and dreams, and documenting their unmet needs. Construction estimators are trained volunteers who go into a community and assist long-term recovery groups as they determine the appropriate materials, skills, and time required to complete home reconstruction after a disaster.

World Renew's primary focus in domestic disaster response is housing reconstruction, which is accomplished by a group of skilled, willing volunteers who commit to spending an average of three weeks on a construction site. DRS typically makes a twelve-month commitment to a hurting community and then provides volunteers with housing, tools, food, and management. In 2012, 685 DRS volunteers spent 94,364 hours rebuilding disaster-damaged homes in Slave Lake, Alberta; Crooked Creek, Alaska; Birmingham, Alabama; Cullman, Alabama; Munster, Indiana; Hyde County, North Carolina; Schoharie, New York; and Galveston County, Texas. In total, they repaired or rebuilt 101 homes.

Short-term volunteers identify themselves from church groups (both youth groups and skilled adult groups) and also from colleges, businesses, and families. They typically work for one week, doing a variety of cleanup and reconstruction jobs that depend on the survivor's needs and the volunteer's skill level. In 2012, short-term volunteers worked with 32 different partners in the United States and Canada, with 1,823 group volunteers providing 106,951 hours to help repair 392 homes. This included returning groups from congregations in the Toronto and Chicago areas that committed to multiweek rebuilding projects.

DRS has regional project managers and area representatives across the United States and Canada. They each have specific geographic areas to monitor, network with local disaster organizations, promote World Renew

DRS, and make contact with churches and volunteers. These volunteers gave 10,459 hours of their time to this ministry in 2012.

III. Human resources management

World Renew's Human Resources (HR) management function provides HR support to functional and ministry teams, including but not limited to recruitment and selection, performance management, employee relations, HR systems, advisory support for team leaders in their region, and international disaster response HR responsibilities.

The HR team continues to focus on achieving gender and racial diversity. World Renew is committed to the process of gender mainstreaming with the goal of gender equality. As part of its gender plan, World Renew regularly tracks goals regarding the number of both men and women in leadership positions, staff perception about their team's commitment to gender equality, and the participation of men and women in decision-making. Fifty-three percent of World Renew's leadership positions (those with a job level of 14 or higher) are held by women.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all World Renew staff. It gives staff an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments and to critically review growth areas. World Renew is thankful for all of its human resources, which are a critical avenue through which we provide for communities in need around the globe.

IV. Board matters

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

The World Renew governance structure is made up of delegates from each of the classes, in addition to up to 27 members at-large, which constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew. 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 World Renew as a whole.

A. Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada

Mr. James Joosse, president
Mr. Bill Van Geest, vice president
Ms. Truusje Genesis, secretary
Mr. Ben Van Hoffen, treasurer
Mr. Francisco Angulo
Mr. John DeGroot
Rev. Rita Klein-Geltink, pastoral adviser

B. Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.

Mr. Roy Zuidema, president
Mr. Paul Wassink, vice president
Mr. Bill Haverkamp, secretary
Mr. Don Bouwer, treasurer
Ms. Jodi Cole Meyer

Mr. Steve Westra
Rev. Thea N. Leunk, pastoral adviser

C. *World Renew board nominations*

1. U.S. member-at-large delegates

The board of World Renew requests that synod appoint the following to a three-year term as U.S. members at-large:

Ms. Mary vanBuren (Ritsema) grew up in Zeeland, Michigan, and is a graduate of Calvin College. She is an active member of the Oak Hills CRC in Beaverton, Oregon, where she has served as deacon, and she currently serves as liaison between the deacons and finance, as well as chairperson of the youth committee. Ms. vanBuren also serves as chairperson of the Classis Columbia Diaconal Committee. She is employed as operations manager for the local sales office and dealership for Herman Miller, Inc., Workplace Resource of Oregon. Her responsibilities include operations, finance, human resources, and process improvement.

Ms. Sarah B. Rinsema-Sybenga is a member of Bethany CRC in Muskegon, Michigan, and is executive director of Community enCompass, a Christian community development organization in downtown Muskegon. She has served as a volunteer for World Renew in Cambodia and as an intern with Project HOPE in the Grand Rapids/Muskegon, Michigan, area. Ms. Rinsema-Sybenga would like to serve on the board of World Renew because she is “interested in learning more about the worldwide work of World Renew, building relationships with others who share a global passion for transformation, and helping more North American churches understand how they can play meaningful, life-changing roles in community development both domestically and internationally.”

2. Reappointment of U.S. members

The following U.S. nominees are completing their first term on the board and are being recommended for a second three-year term: Mr. Steve Westra (Grandville), Rev. John Algera (Hackensack), Mr. Cornelius (Cornie) Van Tol (Muskegon), Mr. William (Bill) Janssen (Northcentral Iowa).

3. Canada member-at-large delegate

The board of World Renew requests that synod appoint the following to a three-year term as a Canada member at-large:

Mr. Jeff Becker is a student at Redeemer University College, majoring in music and history. His home church is Bethel CRC in Acton, Ontario, where he has been an active member for six years. In addition to his involvement at his church leading musical worship, youth group, and VBS, he participated with a team of volunteers to serve the Pax North Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to help the homeless and underprivileged and to plan VBS for children. Mr. Becker also plans to go to Zambia to serve in a ministry that helps orphans. His interest in international development was first sparked when he learned about worldwide injustice and turmoil through many history classes at Redeemer. He is a passionate believer with a keen interest in living out his faith by working with those who are oppressed or less fortunate to help meet their immediate spiritual and physical needs.

4. Reappointment of Canada members-at-large

The following Canadian board members are completing their first term on the board and are being recommended for a second three-year term: Mr. John DeWilde and Mr. Jason Gehrels.

V. Finance

A. *Salary disclosure*

In accordance with synod’s mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, World Renew reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd
16	4	1st

B. *Detailed financial information*

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2013—Financial and Business Supplement*.

VI. Resource development

Last year, World Renew was blessed to receive a total of \$44,495,225 from all sources in the United States and Canada. Of this amount, \$22.8 million came from our churches and individual donors. This was then leveraged through grants, partnerships, and other collaborations. Just over \$930,000 was received through government grants, and more than \$12.6 million came from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for emergency disaster response and food security programs. World Renew also received more than \$7.6 million in grants from organizations in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, and about \$390,000 from its investments.

World Renew directed \$10 million of its 2012 financial resources toward core international development programs, and over \$23 million went to disaster response. More than \$1 million was used for community development in North America, and another \$1 million went toward constituent education.

World Renew uses about 8 percent of its resources for general management and fundraising purposes—meaning that 92 percent or more of the money you entrust to World Renew helps those who experience poverty, injustice, and disaster with life-saving, life-changing programs that witness to the justice and mercy of Jesus Christ.

Looking forward, World Renew is pleased to report that it has received approval for several proposals it submitted to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This includes programs submitted in the “over \$2 million,” “under \$2 million,” “youth internship,” and “Muskoka Child and Maternal Health” categories. We are grateful for our continued relationship with CIDA and look forward to the expanded ministry that this funding will provide.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Roy Zuidema, president of World Renew-U.S.; Mr. James Joosse, president of World Renew-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of World Renew-U.S.; and Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of World Renew-Canada, when World Renew matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew 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 ballot appoint and reappoint members for the World Renew 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.

World Renew

Andrew Ryskamp, director, World Renew-U.S.

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew-Canada

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (Rev. Ron Klimp, director)

I. Introduction

The mandate given by synod to the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry is “Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional or specialized settings.” The mission of the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry is “to implement and regulate the denomination’s commitment to chaplaincy by recruiting, training, and endorsing persons to provide ministry in specialized settings, including military chaplains, pastoral counselors, institutional spiritual caregivers, hospice care, and others called to minister in places where the institutional church is not present. The office supports and promotes the development of chaplaincy and related ministries for the denomination.”

We like to refer to our chaplains informally as “the first responders of the spiritual world in secular settings.”

The second part of the ministry’s title (*and Care*) was added by Synod 2009 to emphasize the importance of reconnecting chaplains and their gifts to the broader commitment of our churches to be caring communities. By requiring a Covenant of Joint Supervision to be formulated between each calling church, chaplain, and this office, we are creating more conversations with churches and seeing more deliberate interaction between the parties. We are also taking steps to remind classes to recognize, include, pray for, and utilize the skills of chaplains.

II. Ministries of the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

A. *Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

Our chaplains have the unique opportunity to influence individual lives in crisis. They also influence the institutions in which they serve by calling the organizations to ethical standards of care and concern. This influence of our chaplains stretches literally from the prison to the Pentagon.

Currently we have seven chaplains serving as clinical pastoral education supervisors. That means they are instrumental in training our future chaplains and those of other denominations as well. A number of other chaplains serve as directors of departments, or independently manage counseling or chaplaincy ministries. Some of our chaplains also serve in leadership roles in a variety of professional organizations, including the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care, the C.G. Jung Institute of Chicago, the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, the Michigan Chaplains Association, and the VISN 18 Chaplain Operational Board.

Two of our twenty-four military chaplains received promotions this past year. One is currently serving as a chaplain at Arlington Cemetery in Washington, D.C. We currently have five chaplains with the rank of Colonel (Admiral in the Navy), four with the rank of Lt. Colonel (Commander in the Navy), and four with the rank of Major (Lt. Cmdr. in the Navy). Two

serve in the Canadian Forces. Several of our military chaplains are currently deployed overseas, one of whom has received the Army Ranger pin and recently returned from a third deployment with a Special Forces group in Afghanistan. Six of our military chaplains have filled positions in the Pentagon over the past twenty years.

B. Ministry to and with local churches

All chaplains have a calling church. Most have filled the pulpit of their calling church or other area churches on numerous occasions. Some have served on the church council, at classis, and as delegates to synod. Some pastor local churches while serving a local hospice, prison, or Reserve military unit part-time. Chaplains conduct adult education classes and workshops, and they help formally and informally with pastoral care in local congregations. We intend to encourage this interaction with the local church as part of the new emphasis reflected in the title of this ministry: *Chaplaincy and Care*. A document called “Covenant of Joint Supervision” (an agreement for mutual accountability between a chaplain and his/her calling church) is now a prerequisite for endorsement or endorsement renewal.

In addition, we look for opportunities to remind churches and classes to

- encourage our young people to prayerfully consider a wide range of ministry options, including chaplaincy.
- pray regularly for chaplains who walk daily with those in crisis situations, who have significant influence in secular institutions, who serve in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations, and who are separated from home and family by military deployment.
- welcome chaplains at their regular meetings (some classes have appointed a “chaplain of the day” for each meeting) and to explore with them how to use their training and gifts to benefit the care ministries of the local church.

We are also currently encouraging churches to be particularly aware of the needs of deployed and returning military members and families. We are able to share some ideas and information with those who request them, or to refer them to materials available from other sources.

C. Endorsement renewals

Since the adoption of a significant report to Synod 2003, endorsement has been considered nonpermanent but renewable every time a chaplain changes employers or every five years. Since chaplains (like the rest of our society) are changing employers more frequently and some find themselves serving several part-time positions rather than one full-time position, it seems more appropriate and manageable to simply renew these endorsements in five-year increments rather than on the basis of change to a different employer. After discussion with a group made up of former chaplaincy directors, the current deputy executive director, members of our advisory committee, the current director of candidacy, and others, including Dr. Henry De Moor (our local Church Order expert), we have determined that renewal every five years may be the more consistent and manageable way to renew endorsements in the future.

D. Collaborative efforts

The Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry collaborated with a number of agencies and organizations over the past year:

1. We have helped to initiate a discussion among a number of individuals and agencies within our denomination focused on developing a process to better assess the gifts, competencies, aptitudes, and personality traits that would suggest the “best fit” (parish ministry, church planting, missions, chaplaincy, etc.) for an individual interested in kingdom service. After two years of discussion, that effort has resulted in hiring a consultant to study current procedures and understandings related to career and leadership development in our denomination and others. Based on his recommendations and further discussion, we have begun a pilot project to explore a more coordinated assessment and career guidance process across the spectrum of denominational ministries and institutions.
2. We have worked with *The Banner* and other publishers to get the stories of chaplains out to the denomination and other church bodies.
3. These and other stories, plus information about chaplaincy, are now available on our denominational website at www.crcna.org/chaplaincy.

E. Diversity and development of future ministry

Currently 22 of our 128 endorsed chaplains are female. Six represent ethnic minorities. Most of these have been endorsed in the past decade. Based on current applicants and students showing an interest in chaplaincy, we expect this trend to continue. The future of chaplaincy depends on several things beyond our control (the growth or restriction of chaplaincy positions in the military and institutional settings of the United States and Canada) but also on developing an interest among younger (and older) members of our denomination who feel drawn to full- or part-time ministry. We believe that we are expanding this interest by interacting with students at Christian colleges and seminaries throughout North America and by encouraging chaplains to tell their rich and moving stories of interacting with individuals in crisis situations. We are also attempting to interact with churches and classes to help create opportunities for these stories to be heard.

F. Current chaplaincy statistics

1. Total chaplains serving the CRCNA: 128 (full-time, 96; part-time, 24; endorsed-unemployed, 8)
2. Chaplains in the United States: 110
3. Chaplains in Canada: 18
4. Active military chaplains: 13 in the United States; 2 in Canada; 4 in the National Guard and Reserves
5. Eight new chaplains: Michael Altena, Chad Haan, William Harris III, Joseph Kamphuis, Jessica Oosterhouse, Sandy Reynolds, Thomas Rolf, and Barbara Schultze.
6. Four recently retired chaplains: Henry Smidstra, William Van Dyken, John Van Regenmorter, and Harry Vriend.
7. Military chaplains who have served in the past year, or are currently serving, overseas are (Capt.) Richard Hill, (Maj.) InSoon Hoagland, (Capt.) Peter Hofman, (Capt.) Antonio Illas, (Lt. Cmdr.) David Jeltema, (Capt.)

Cornelius Muasa, (Maj.) Timothy Rietkerk, (Capt.) Gerald Van Smeedyk, (Lt. Cmdr.) Doug Vrieland, and (Maj.) Timothy Won.

Note: These chaplains interact daily with thousands of people, often in crisis situations, who may or may not have a faith commitment or a church connection. At a very nominal cost to the CRCNA, their employer's total ministry support has an estimated value over \$8 million annually.

III. Recruitment and training

We continue to connect with Christian colleges in the United States and Canada to promote chaplaincy. At most of these events, several of our current or retired chaplains are able to tell their stories and answer questions from students.

This seems to represent a growing interest among educational institutions and students in the "nontraditional" ministry options like chaplaincy. We currently are working with twenty-two students and assisting them as needed in their education both financially and through mentoring. Funding for this will in the future come increasingly from the Chaplains Development Fund. We are encouraging many of our contributors to specify this fund with their gift.

We maintain a list of persons interested in chaplaincy ministry (currently over one hundred people). Every other month the office sends job postings to these persons and our current chaplains.

Every year (in June, just before synod meets) CRC chaplains gather for a conference sponsored by Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Since chaplains work at the margins of church and society, they relish the time they can spend with each other at the annual conference to renew friendships, learn together, and talk with fellow servants of the Lord who are living with the unique pressures, joys, and challenges that chaplaincy brings.

Committee for Contact with the Government/Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (Mr. Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager)

The Committee for Contact with the Government, operating as the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, is a justice and reconciliation ministry of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada. From an office just steps from Parliament Hill in Ottawa, the Centre for Public Dialogue works to cultivate passionate citizenship in Christian communities, studies critical issues facing Canadian society from a Reformed perspective, and interacts with legislators in a constructive manner.

The Centre for Public Dialogue works with an assumption that *acts of passionate citizenship* at the local level are the most critical testimony in support of God's call to justice and reconciliation today. For this reason we are developing learning resources and animating conferences on Indigenous justice and reconciliation, refugee justice, and faithful citizenship for the common good in our diverse society. Please connect with us at www.crcna.ca/PublicDialogue to learn more about these great learning and action opportunities.

In addition to deepening interactions with congregations, the Centre for Public Dialogue will continue a research and advocacy program on Indigenous Education Reform, in anticipation of the forthcoming First Nations Education Act. This work is based on extensive listening to Indigenous leaders and educators and is one of the key policy priorities for a reconciliation agenda.

The Centre for Public Dialogue also looks forward to supporting the synodical Doctrine of Discovery Task Force. Given the foundational significance of that doctrine for law and policy concerning Indigenous peoples, we eagerly await the testimony and learning that will come out of this study. We expect to provide research and communications support for this important work.

In all our work we experience the blessings of partnerships with the Reformed Church in America Regional Synod of Canada, the Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee, the Office of Race Relations, the Office of Social Justice, and many others. We give thanks for these partners and friends in the journey of justice and reconciliation.

Disability Concerns (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

I. Introduction

The mission of the Office of Disability Concerns (DC) is “to bring about the full participation of all people with disabilities in the life of the church and the full participation of the church in the lives of people with disabilities.” Our mandate is “to gather and disseminate information on services available from and through the CRC and other denominations, to increase awareness among our constituency of the special needs of persons with disabilities, and to assist the churches in identifying and eliminating those barriers which hinder the full participation of persons who have disabilities in the life of the church.” Our vision can be summarized briefly: “In churches, ministries, and communities, everybody belongs, and everybody serves.”

DC celebrates two significant anniversaries in 2012 and 2013. Last year we observed our 30th birthday, and this year our denomination marks the 20th anniversary since synod “heartily recommend[ed] full compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its accompanying regulations in all portions of the CRC located in the U.S. and Canada” (*Acts of Synod* 1993, p. 542). Although U.S. churches are required only to observe the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Canadian churches have no obligation to follow the ADA, with this sweeping decision, synod applied the provisions and regulations of the ADA to all churches and ministries in our denomination.

II. Ministries of Disability Concerns

A. Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide

We have been expanding our resources in the Korean and Spanish languages. Online, our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, has been available in Spanish (*Rompiendo Barreras*) and in Korean (장애물 헐기) for several years, and our *Inclusion Handbook* is now available in Spanish (*Manual de Inclusión*). This

past February, we cosponsored a conference in southern California in which Korean-language options (and English) were available throughout the day. Over 18,000 unique visitors found resources on the DC website and Network pages last year, and we note hundreds of visits each from countries such as South Africa, India, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Our director serves on the executive committee of the Committee on Disabilities of the National Council of Churches in Christ and on the board of Pathways to Promise, a parachurch organization that helps churches minister to people affected by mental illnesses.

B. Ministry to and with the local churches

Our network of volunteer disability advocates form the backbone of our ministry. We have regional disability advocates who serve 35 (out of 47) CRC classes, about 600 church advocates, 7 agency advocates, and 8 DC advisory committee members. Besides the advisory committee, we have 5 regional committees that meet occasionally for networking and for service to churches in Michigan, Ontario, Alberta, the U.S. Heartland, and Illinois. Most of these committees now include people from both the CRC and Reformed Church in America Disability Concerns ministries. Also, the bi-national DC Mental Health Task Force assists churches in ministry to people with mental illnesses. Our staff consists of our full-time director and two part-time administrative assistants serving in Canada and the United States.

Over the past year, church and regional advocates, as well as DC staff, have contacted nearly every CRC congregation to introduce them to the resources our ministry offers and to answer questions they may have about accessibility and about ministry with people who have disabilities. DC volunteers and staff have organized and taught at conferences, led workshops in churches, and consulted with many CRCs about engaging people with disabilities in church life. As we do each year, our office recommends that churches devote special focus to ministry with people who have disabilities by celebrating Disability Week from October 14-20, 2013.

DC provides a variety of print resources to congregations, including our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, the *Inclusion Handbook*, and a handbook for pastoral care, *A Compassionate Journey: Coming Alongside People with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses*. On our website and Network pages, we offer free worship resources, Bible studies, sample sermons, accessibility materials, and ministry ideas as well as a parent forum and discussion on contemporary issues related to disability.

C. Collaborative efforts

In 2008 the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the CRC formed a Disability Concerns partnership. This partnership has borne fruit, including joint publication of the newsletter *Breaking Barriers*, the *Inclusion Handbook*, and a Facebook page. We have cosponsored several conferences and other events in various locations, including southern California, western Michigan, and Ontario. A DC conference in British Columbia last September was the first sustained effort in that area to result in attracting participation within and outside the CRC and the RCA. CRC and RCA Disability Concerns jointly participate in the regional DC committee meetings and in sponsoring an annual DC leadership conference that encourages, inspires, and informs key volunteers from both ministries.

DC's Mental Health Task Force is a collaboration between Disability Concerns and Classis Quinte's Faith and Hope Ministry. Disability Concerns engages in a number of other collaborations as well, including work with Diaconal Ministries Canada, Christian Reformed World Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary, Trinity Christian College, CLC Network, Friendship Ministries, Hope Network; and in national partnerships, including Pathways to Promise, the Committee on Disabilities of the National Council of Churches, and the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition.

D. Stories to share

When Elmhurst (Ill.) CRC decided to start a disability ministry, they sought advice from Disability Concerns, Elim Christian Services, Joni and Friends, other local churches, and most importantly from families with children who have disabilities. Their regional disability advocate, Mic Altena, both consulted with them about their plans and taught during their adult education hour. As their planning team listened to families affected by disability, they heard about painful struggles, lost dreams, amazing love, and deep faith. Then, taking a step of faith, these parents began sharing their stories during adult education classes on Sunday mornings. They shared their knowledge of disabilities, and they shared their hearts—how they had been helped and hurt by the church. The disability ministry, drawing inspiration from Isaiah 35:3-6, was given the name LEAP—“Living Expectantly, Always Praying!” Instead of focusing on programming, LEAP's purpose is to make connections so that people at Elmhurst, whether or not they are affected by disability, can listen, learn from, and grow in the Lord with each other.

Suzie Giroux of Trinity CRC in Abbotsford, British Columbia, says that her work as a sign language interpreter at church affected her life at least as much as the lives of people for whom she interpreted. When she began interpreting at Trinity, she was neither a member of the church nor a believer. She says, “It seemed that time and again I was interpreting something that addressed a struggle in my own life. For ten years, I declined invitations to attend the Alpha sessions. Interpreting at Trinity was just a job, and I frequently pushed the thought of accepting Jesus out of my head and heart. Then tragedy struck in the loss of a friend's life. I found comfort, peace, and Jesus in the members of Trinity CRC. Everything happens in God's time, and that brought me, brokenhearted and lost, to accept Jesus into my heart on December 19, 2010, and to make public profession of faith on June 5, 2011. The services we provide in building bridges and breaking barriers has an obvious impact on those we serve, and it has touched the heart of this servant.”

E. Development of future ministry

The annual survey of Christian Reformed churches shows that most CRC church buildings have accessible entrances, worship and fellowship areas, classrooms, and restrooms. We have made good progress for people with mobility impairments. But we need to do more than change our buildings to comply fully “with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its accompanying regulations in all portions of the CRC located in the U.S. and Canada,” as we decided in 1993. At least 400 CRCs lack a church disability advocate. Two-thirds of the churches have no policy on disability. Half of churches offer no aids for people with hearing impairments, and 60 percent offer nothing for people with visual impairments. Because imple-

mentation of this decision has been inconsistent in the churches, Disability Concerns will work closely with our volunteers to help churches move closer to the ideal we set for ourselves 20 years ago, and we recommend that each church adopt a policy on disability as well as appoint at least one disability advocate from among their congregation.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to adopt a church policy on disability and to appoint at least one person in the congregation to serve as a church disability advocate.

Grounds:

1. Churches that have a policy on disability and a church disability advocate have both a framework and a person to help them comply with the synodical decision of 1993 that calls all portions of the CRC located in the United States and Canada to comply fully with the provisions and regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Subsequent to the decision of Synod 1993, federal and provincial governments in Canada have ratified the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that provides a standard for Canada.
2. Church advocates can provide direction to pastors, elders, and deacons not only to make the church building, program, and communication accessible but also to find appropriate assistance for persons affected by disabilities.
3. When the apostle Paul urged the churches of Corinth to take up an offering for the impoverished church in Jerusalem, he argued that “your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness” (2 Cor. 8:14, ESV). Churches that commit to a policy on disability will make their buildings, programs, and communication accessible for all members (including those with disabilities), so that “there may be fairness.” In doing so, these churches proclaim that everybody belongs, and everybody has the opportunity to serve.
4. Churches that have a church advocate and commit to a church policy on disability will be better able to provide assistance and prevent further harm for people who experience the often traumatic onset of disabilities.
5. Churches that have a policy and advocate are more likely to take the necessary steps to take their churches beyond the minimum requirements of the law, and lead their communities in engaging people with disabilities.
6. Our Lord’s call to reach people with the gospel includes reaching the 20 percent of the population who have disabilities in addition to their family members and friends. Churches that seek to fulfill the calls of our Lord in Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 14:13-14 will benefit greatly from committing to a policy and appointing an advocate.

B. That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Week from October 14-20, 2013.

Grounds:

1. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities will remind God's people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).
2. This date coincides with the denominational schedule for offerings, which assigns the third Sunday in October to Disability Concerns.
3. The Bible calls God's people to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. In 1985, the CRC committed itself as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude "in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God's family." Although our Lord Jesus calls all of his people to ministry in his church, the church has not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully and sometimes has isolated them and their families.

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Norman J. Thomasma, team leader—Congregational Life; Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, lead consulting pastor)

I. Introduction

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) maintains focus on its mandate to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. Over the thirty years of its existence, PCR and the churches have been challenged to recognize that while these functions remain basic, there are adjustments required because of changing culture, economic factors, and programs. One area to note is the "clustering" of ministries that has been happening over the past years with ministries such as PCR, Sustaining Congregational Excellence, and Safe Church Ministry. The current name of this newly developing cluster is *Congregational Life*.

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

II. Ministries of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations

A. Probably the most familiar activity of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is its *direct* involvement in cultivating healthier relationships within the life of congregations. To increase capacity, PCR has identified several skilled experienced practitioners who can assist with this work on a contract basis. PCR is also exploring innovative ways to work creatively with churches and pastors in crisis or transition.

B. PCR extends its work through *regional pastors* in classes who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses 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 persons within a congregation. And PCR's relationship with *classical church visitors* continues to grow with occasions for collaboration and opportunities for training.

C. PCR 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.

D. 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.

E. Specialized Transitional Ministers are trained to help congregations deal with challenges and opportunities during the transition between pastors. With a growing number of recently retired pastors, congregations are also using other pastors as *supply pastors*. These pastors are not working directly with PCR, although PCR does maintain a limited list of pastors available for this work.

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations desires to codify the status of Specialized Transitional Ministers who are endorsed by our office. Endorsement is provided to pastors who are recognized as meeting established criteria of training, giftedness, and suitability for the work of intentional transitional ministry. Their credentials are held by a calling church; however, they serve different congregations "under contract." Pastor-Church Relations presents the following revision to Church Order Article 12-b with grounds.

That Synod 2013 adopt the following revisions to Church Order Article 12-b (indicated by strikethrough and italic):

b. A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions, ~~or~~ chaplaincy, *or specialized transitional ministry*; or (2) is appointed directly by synod; or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

Grounds:

1. It is not desirable to have an interim minister of the Word called by each church that he or she serves for a relatively short period of time and have credentials forwarded upon every move to another congregation.
2. The congregation that currently holds the credentials of one entering into specialized transitional ministry or another congregation of the minister's choosing can call this person for all future service in this capacity, acting in cooperation with Pastor-Church Relations and councils of congregations to be served.
3. Supervision of specialized transitional ministers can be regulated according to Article 13-b in its current form.

F. Through the Staff Ministry Team (SMT), a subcommittee of PCR, over 1,000 nonordained church professionals are being supported in a variety of ways. Opportunities for networking and distribution of resources are offered, and churches are increasingly requesting services pertaining to staffing issues. SMT is currently piloting a credentialing process for church staff.

G. On behalf of synod, the Office of 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. Applicants access this information through the PCR website.

H. The Ministerial Information Service maintains a database of more than eight hundred pastor profiles as well as several hundred congregation profiles. These profiles are used by search committees of congregations looking for pastors and by pastors seeking new positions. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations, with the assistance of a volunteer committee, recommends pastor candidates for search committees of congregations.

I. One significant project completed in 2012 was a training tool for congregations that are facing a pastor vacancy. *More Than a Search Committee* helps councils develop effective pastor search processes. It was written as a companion volume to an Alban Institute publication called *Beginning Ministry Together*, and the training tool provides more specific direction relative to the CRCNA context. Copies are available on the website or free of charge through Faith Alive (www.faithaliveresources.org).

J. PCR continues to partner with On Point Ministries of Stillwater, Minnesota. Two venues are offered, one being a wilderness experience with a group of pastors. The other is a one-to-one venue provided in Stillwater. On Point Ministries, directed by Mark Stevenson, provides an “in-depth” vocational assessment using a System for Identifying Motivated Abilities.

III. Considerations for the future

A. PCR is exploring ways to develop a web-based approach to the Ministerial Information Service, an approach that may provide greater freedom for communication among churches looking for pastors as well as for pastors and pastor candidates looking for churches.

B. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with newly ordained pastors and church staff. Given synod’s decisions about *commissioned pastors*, PCR is finding ways to better serve this expanding group among the churches. We are also meeting with Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy students currently enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary and are familiarizing them with the work of our office.

C. In response to requests from synod and the Board of Trustees, PCR is exploring and developing ways to become involved with congregations before times of significant tension and relational challenge. These are both present and future challenges facing not only PCR but also other ministries assisting and serving congregations.

IV. Recommendation

That Synod 2013 adopt the following revisions to Church Order Article 12-b (indicated by strikethrough and italic):

b. A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions, ~~or~~ chaplaincy, *or specialized transitional ministry*; or (2) is appointed directly by synod; or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

Grounds:

1. It is not desirable to have an interim minister of the Word called by each church that he or she serves for a relatively short period of time and have credentials forwarded upon every move to another congregation.
2. The congregation that currently holds the credentials of one entering into specialized transitional ministry or another congregation of the minister's choosing can call this person for all future service in this capacity, acting in cooperation with Pastor-Church Relations and councils of congregations to be served.
3. Supervision of specialized transitional ministers can be regulated according to Article 13-b in its current form.

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The Office of Race Relations continues in its pursuit of greater impact for ministry through partnerships by developing collaborations with denominational agencies, specialized ministries, the Reformed Church in America, and Christian Reformed institutions of higher learning as well as organizations outside the CRC. The four strategic initiatives that Race Relations is privileged to be responsible for are (1) antiracism and racial reconciliation initiatives that provide education and resources, (2) the Multiethnic Conference, (3) All Nations Heritage celebrations, and (4) a scholarship program that provides not only financial assistance but also training in antiracism and cultural awareness for students attending our institutions of higher education.

Within our antiracism and racial reconciliation mandate, we are called to provide education and resources to equip our denomination not only to combat the effects of the sin of racism but also to facilitate reconciliation through both workshops and materials. We offer several workshops, but our chief ones are Widening the Circle in Canada and the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) in the United States. In addition, we have a second-level antiracism workshop, the Dance of Racial Reconciliation: Level 2, ready to pilot. In partnership with the CRC Office of Social Justice and the Reformed Church in America (RCA), Church Between Borders: A Workshop on Immigration Reform has been developed and piloted. Cultural Intelligence Building, our newest workshop, focuses on four concrete skill areas—knowledge, motivation, interpretation, and behavior—to learn about and then to improve one's ability to act and react in positive ways across cultural lines. A DVD, *Facing Racism*, takes participants through a series of six small-group studies that, in the end, enables them and their congregations to engage the issue of racism and reconciliation in a modern way. Leadership and Race,

another workshop, develops and supports leadership that contributes to racial justice. A small-group DORR curriculum, which covers twelve weeks, is available in both English and Spanish and is readily adaptable to an adult Sunday morning time slot.

Our materials include the 1996 synodical study committee report, *God's Diverse and Unified Family*, which provides the theological underpinnings for antiracism. It is available for purchase from Faith Alive Christian Resources in both English and Spanish. In addition to this resource, we provide bulletins and bulletin covers for All Nations Heritage celebrations the first Sunday in October each year. The 2013 All Nations Heritage Sunday is October 6. A racially and ethnically diverse committee of sixteen people is now planning the synodically mandated Multiethnic Conference, held every two years. The 2013 conference will take place June 7-9, 2013, in Grand Rapids at Calvin College, the meeting place for synod. Please browse our website for further information as the date draws near (www.crcna.org/race/multiethnic-conference). The Office of Race Relations also sponsors a Race Relations Scholarship Program. More information is available, including the application forms, on our website at www.crcna.org/race/scholarships. Finally, we support the CRCNA Race Relations Team, which serves within the administrative offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Burlington, Ontario; and Palos Heights, Illinois, to encourage and work toward a racism-free environment within our workplaces.

The Office of Race Relations is working to assist our congregations in their efforts to become culturally intelligent regarding the work of antiracism and racial reconciliation through a new project called the Community Connect Initiative. The initiative entails identifying ten to twelve congregations and their leaders within the CRCNA's twelve regions in the United States and Canada to participate in a six-month process of training through workshops. The workshops involved are Cultural Intelligence Building, Church Between Borders, Dance of Racial Reconciliation/Widening the Circle, Leadership and Race, Partner 2 Partner (Timothy Leadership Training Institute), and Everybody Belongs; Everybody Serves (Office of Disability Concerns). The goal is for congregations and their leaders to increase their capacity for being culturally intelligent and to be identified as a resource for CRC leaders and congregations by encouraging and assisting them in equipping other congregations to do the same.

The Office of Race Relations, the Office of Social Justice, and the Centre for Public Dialogue are entering a collaboration to provide resources to help our churches throughout North America engage issues of justice and reconciliation. The goal is to be intentional about disseminating justice and reconciliation information so that congregations are involved in their communities and the issues that affect them.

The denomination continues to face the challenge of placing a high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in life together as a church, as well as on the integrity of that identity. To that end, the ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. Race Relations is committed to its statement of vision and its mandate to make the CRCNA a truly diverse and unified family of God. We continue to attribute all the progress and success that has been made in this ministry only to the grace and goodness of God. To this end, we covet your prayers.

Safe Church Ministry (Bonnie Nicholas, director)

I. Introduction

The Office of Safe Church Ministry is a resource for churches in abuse awareness, prevention, and response. We desire churches that are safe from any threat of abuse, where the infinite value of each person is honored. In addition, the church has an important role to play in responding to those who have been impacted by abuse. Responding appropriately with compassion and justice can lead to restoration and healing in communion with the Lord and with his people.

II. Ministries of Safe Church Ministry

A. Ministry that transforms lives and communities worldwide

The gospel speaks directly to the core of abuse, misuse of power for selfish gain, whether physical, sexual or emotional. Abuse stands in stark contrast to the way of Jesus. We are called to follow him in humility and self-sacrificing love (see Phil. 2).

Building awareness about abuse is an important key. *Safe Church Ministry: A Church Leader's Role* is a user-friendly guide about the role of Safe Church, the dynamics of abuse, and helpful ways for the church to respond. In addition, a companion guide has now been created to help churches respond to an allegation of abuse against a church leader. *The Advisory Panel Process: A Guide for Church Councils* describes the process step by step with particular attention to the role of the church council. These, along with many other resources, help build awareness.

B. Ministry with the local church

Safe Church is promoting the *Circle of Grace* program, used by a growing number of churches. The program equips children and youth to be actively involved in a safe environment. It focuses on God's presence with each person in his or her *Circle of Grace*. It's one of the best tools available for building respectful communities and preventing abuse.

Abuse Awareness Sunday, the fourth Sunday in September, was promoted with letters to churches and to Safe Church team members. The 2012 topic, Internet pornography, was discussed in a bulletin insert titled "shhhh...." Almost 24,000 inserts were requested by 148 churches. In addition, a page was added to the Safe Church website with additional resources on the topic. Many churches took this opportunity to preach, teach, and pray about abuse-related issues using Safe Church resources.

Safe Church receives calls and requests for information from churches and individuals all year long. During 2012, over 800 interactions with churches and individuals were recorded. These interactions range from simple questions about policy, to questions from church leaders about how to respond in various situations.

C. Collaborative efforts

Two separate class sessions at Calvin Theological Seminary were facilitated by Safe Church. We are pleased to be involved in equipping these future leaders in the CRC.

The 2012 Safe Church Ministry conference showed partnerships with international as well as local organizations that are engaged in the work of abuse awareness. Featured presenters came from Religion and Violence E-Learning (theRAVEproject.com) in New Brunswick; Shalem Mental Health Network in Ontario; the Presbyterian Church in Canada; Safe Haven Ministries in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Living Free Prayer Ministry in Lansing, Michigan; and a poet and an author from Michigan, who combined their efforts in a powerful storytelling workshop. The conference was attended by over 70 Safe Church team members, coming from all over the United States and Canada. Team members were sponsored with funds from their local churches and classes. Several seminary students also took advantage of the invitation to join us for an evening plenary session to learn more about domestic violence.

Safe Church continues to collaborate with the Office of Social Justice to move forward the agenda of restorative justice, especially using restorative practices in churches. We also work with the Office of Pastor Church Relations in dealing with various church situations, with Faith Alive Christian Resources to offer resources related to Safe Church, and with other denominational agencies and ministries.

D. Stories to share

Appreciation and thanks were received from those who attended a Safe Church presentation at a Classis Southeast U.S. meeting. As a result, a launch team is now working to establish a Safe Church team there, where previously none existed.

Restorative circle processes have successfully handled conflict situations in several churches. The circles were facilitated by Safe Church team members, using skills that they sharpened at a FaithCARE (Communities Affirming Restorative Experiences) conference in June. Using a restorative paradigm fits well with Safe Church principles of empowerment and respect for all. We long to see an increase in the use of restorative practices.

There are many stories to tell, more than this space allows. Many cannot be shared in such a public format. Some of the stories have positive endings; some do not. We still have much to learn before more positive outcomes become the norm.

E. Development of future ministry

Five goals guide the work of Safe Church Ministry as we look to the future:

1. Each church has implemented a written Safe Church/abuse prevention policy. Currently only half of our churches have such a policy.
2. Each church includes abuse prevention in its church school and youth education. Programs such as *Circle of Grace*, which teach positive respect in relationships, are recommended.
3. Each church has protocols in place for responding to misconduct and is aware of the recommended *Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader*, approved by Synod 2010.
4. Abuse is acknowledged as an important issue and can be freely discussed.

5. Leadership at all levels is supportive of Safe Church Ministry, and each church has a Safe Church committee and is represented on a classis Safe Church team. Currently only 24 out of 47 classes have a Safe Church team.

The top priority in reaching toward these goals is developing and training Safe Church Ministry teams to be the best possible resource to local churches. The expectations for these teams will be clear, to engage churches in striving toward the above goals, with the focus on awareness and prevention. We are in the process of redesigning our training to better equip Safe Church team members for this role. We are also working with stated clerks of classes and others in areas where there are currently no Safe Church teams. In addition, we will train a few people more comprehensively in the *Advisory Panel Process* so that they will be specifically trained to serve more effectively in this unique role.

III. Recruitment and training

Safe Church Ministry will continue to find people with a passion for this important ministry and will give them the tools they need to provide effective leadership in our churches and classes.

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 (OSJ) to address these root causes.

Today the OSJ 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 OSJ works to educate CRC members and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues. The OSJ is also occasionally involved in direct advocacy.

The Office of Social Justice acts in three ways: (1) through congregational social justice contacts or groups, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions, 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?

Doing justice is about making things right. It is seeking restoration of our world and society through vocal, active, fearless love for others. It is being part of Jesus' incredible ministry of reconciliation, restoring broken relationships, and making all things new.

Justice is the work we are already doing—renewed, revamped, refocused on the needs of the marginalized. It is a lens that reframes our community

outreach, coffee hour, missions, and worship. Seeking justice makes us question whether we are actually putting the last first and standing with the poor, oppressed, and powerless.

III. Our work

A. We assist congregations to understand and become active in social justice issues

1. With World Renew, the OSJ continues to support the Micah Challenge, a global Christian movement that 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 its root causes. This past fall marked the third year of our “Show of Hands” campaign, which celebrates the progress made thus far on the goals and encourages continued support.
2. Our Advent devotional series, a joint effort from the OSJ and World Renew, was our most widely read and shared publication this year, with over 1,700 subscribers, many of whom were not previously connected to the OSJ. This is in keeping with our new focus on reaching and serving a larger part of the denomination, not just those who already recognize the importance of justice.
3. The OSJ has also partnered with World Renew to start a new movement of justice-seeking within our churches. The Congregation Justice Mobilization (CJM) project is well into its sixth year with a shared full-time coordinator. Some of the many initiatives coming out of CJM include presentations on various hot topics, an expanded resource collection for small groups, and growing relationships with over 350 congregations. This project is furthered by a Canadian staff person in partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue.
4. *OSJ News* is our bimonthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered electronically to over 600 recipients and supplies a unique Christian Reformed perspective on social justice news and events. Another popular resource is *OSJ Prayers*, a weekly email list of the most pressing justice issues around the world with written prayers appropriate for individuals, small groups, and congregations. To subscribe to any of our publications, visit www.crcjustice.org and click on “Newsletters.”
5. The OSJ website (www.crcjustice.org) serves more than two thousand visitors each 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. The OSJ also engages with over two thousand subscribers on Facebook and Twitter who are eager to learn, speak, and act as agents of social justice.

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 select issues important to the CRC.

1. We have added two part-time staff members to promote restorative justice projects in the United States and Canada and to further develop those already in place. Particularly in Canada there is increased emphasis on restorative practices in all areas of communal life. This increased focus on restorative justice stems from the actions of Synod 2005.
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 were charged by Synod 2010 to help the Christian Reformed Church welcome the stranger amidst a broken immigration system. In light of that call, the OSJ's strategy includes three components: (1) increasing congregations' capacities to recognize the dynamic challenges that are faced by migrants, (2) helping congregations to remember that we are created to live in community and that throughout history God has blessed the church with opportunities to welcome strangers, and (3) challenging CRC members to personally and publicly commit to take action to make their communities and nations better places for immigrants to live. Our new "Church Between Borders" curriculum, developed in partnership with the Office of Race Relations, has been presented by our 44 trained facilitators to more than 600 people. We also have joined with the Reformed Church in America to support a local congregation working on behalf of a community of Indonesian asylum seekers.
4. The OSJ has also added a part-time member to our staff to serve as Middle East ministry coordinator. Through our involvement in the Middle East Ministry Team, we help further the CRC's growing desire to be aware of, partner with, and stand in active solidarity with Christian communities in the Middle East. We work in partnership with Christians for Middle East Peace, the Reformed Church in America, Hope Equals, and others in the service of building peace in the Middle East—especially in Palestine-Israel.
5. In response to the Creation Stewardship report to Synod 2012, the OSJ has provided significant resources on the church's responsibility to the creation and the people who are most affected by environmental degradation. We also facilitate presentations in local churches on the report's findings and implications.
6. This year the OSJ provided a Reformed and holistic approach to the issue of abortion in celebration of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. In keeping with our mandate from Synod 2010, we equipped congregations and individuals to lament the loss of life through abortion, understand the complex factors affecting abortion, and speak boldly in defense of all human life.

7. When appropriate for our areas of focus, the OSJ facilitates advocacy activities in Washington, D.C., and supports the work of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue to do the same in Ottawa, Canada. This year such advocacy included comprehensive immigration reform, relief for Indonesian asylum seekers, humanitarian budget cuts, and fund allocation to alleviate the effects of climate change.

The Office of Social Justice, 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 members of the CRC to become salt and light in the service of God's justice and mercy.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The CRC's aboriginal ministry in Canada seeks to support healing, reconciliation, and restored relationships between aboriginal and nonaboriginal peoples in Canada. The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee works with CRC members and congregations to respond to God's call to live in reconciled relationships as covenant (treaty) people before our Creator. It provides leadership and support for learning about aboriginal justice and reconciliation and in putting good words and a theology of healing reconciliation and justice into action.

The three Canadian CRC urban aboriginal ministries are Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina, Saskatchewan; and Native Healing Centre in Edmonton, Alberta. These ministries become the listening ears and hands of help during high crisis in peoples' lives.

For aboriginal Canadians who leave reserves looking for a better life, Canada's large cities can turn out to be more of a nightmare than a dream come true. Historically aboriginal people have been discriminated against in housing, recreation, education, and more. In response, the Christian Reformed Church seeks to help meet the spiritual and social needs of aboriginal Canadians. Each urban aboriginal ministry seeks to respond to the needs of aboriginal peoples in its community. While addressing spiritual needs and engaging in meaningful worship are core components of these ministries, they are truly multiservice delivery centers striving to help aboriginal Canadians to live dignified and harmonious lives.

The Winnipeg Indian Family Centre integrates work and worship in its daily activities, enabling individuals and communities to become self-directing and self-sufficient. The Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina provides a drop-in ministry and daily prayer circle each day. The soup and bannock lunch is linked with a brief devotion, prayer, and announcements by representatives of other community agencies regarding their programs and concerns. The Edmonton Native Healing Centre helps to develop and maintain a native self-sustaining, self-governing, Christian working and worshipping community. There are times to gather in circles for mutual support and also times to share the smudge and pray to the triune Creator Father, Son, and Spirit.

STANDING COMMITTEES

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee mandate is available in a document titled "Journey Toward Ordination," which is available on the Candidacy Committee website (www.crcna.org/candidacy). The members of the committee meet three times per year. As with other denominational committees, Candidacy Committee members serve a potential of two three-year terms.

II. Committee membership

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Joel Kok (2015/1), Rev. Melvin Jackson (2015/2), Ms. Kristen Pikaart (2015/2), Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen (2014/1), Rev. Peter Choi (2014/2), Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma (2013/1), Rev. Ken Koeman (2013/1), Rev. Gilbert Varela (2013/1), Mr. Roy Heerema (2013/2), Rev. Jul Medenblik (ex officio as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), Rev. Joel R. Boot (ex officio as the executive director), and Rev. David R. Koll (nonvoting staff).

Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma and Rev. Ken Koeman are eligible and willing to serve a second term. Rev. Gilbert Varela does not wish to serve a second term. Mr. Roy Heerema is completing his second term on the committee. Thus we present to synod the following persons as nominees to fill two positions:

Position 1

Mr. Victor Chen is an active member of Immanuel CRC in Richmond, British Columbia. He has served on the classis ministerial leadership team of Classis B.C. North-West and on the denominational board of Christian Reformed Home Missions. Mr. Chen is retired from his work as a sales manager for the Sears Company.

Dr. LaVerne Jordan has served as an elder at Horizon Community CRC in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She also serves on the classical ministerial leadership team. Dr. Jordan has a Ph.D. in counselor education and serves as dean of social sciences and humanities at Colorado Christian University. Her higher education experience is primarily in adult alternative education methods.

Position 2

Rev. John Harold Caicedo serves as pastor of the CRC at Iglesia Christiana El Sembrador in Fontana, California. As a commissioned pastor, he planted this church while working on an M.Div. degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. As a candidate approved by Synod 2011, Rev. Caicedo was ordained as a minister of the Word in 2012. Presently he is working on a D.Min. degree at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Rev. Fernando Valencia serves as the Hispanic ministry pastor at Rosewood CRC, Bellflower, California. He was ordained in the CRC in 2010, and he previously served as a pastor in the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, where he also taught in the Seminary and Biblical School for Missionaries.

III. Highlights of the committee's work

A. Development of the nonresident Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

One of the exciting developments of the candidacy work in the past year has been the growth of the nonresident Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) program. The EPMC program is required of those who wish to become candidates for ministry after having earned their Master of Divinity degree at a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary. (Note that the Calvin Theological Seminary M.Div. program includes all the elements of the EPMC within the degree work.)

In the past, students were compelled to take up residency in western Michigan for at least one semester in order to complete this program. Two years ago we began a pilot nonresident version of this program that includes the same academic work, using online technology for instruction. The nonresident program also connects each student to a local CRC ministry and a CRC mentor for a 24-month period, deepening their experience in the CRC and allowing the candidacy system to better know them and help them grow.

The pilot program started in August 2010 with eight persons. By the winter of 2012, twenty-five additional persons were enrolled in this program. The program relies heavily on the dedication and work of volunteer mentors. We are tremendously grateful for the contributions of the following persons who have been trained and are now serving as mentors (some of them for more than one student):

Classis	Mentor
Alberta North	Bill Tuininga
Alberta North	Victor Ko
Alberta North	John Luth
Alberta North	John Ooms
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Martin Boardman
Arizona	Derek Van Dalen
Arizona	Jeff Dykema
BC North-West	Trevor Vanderveen
BC North-West	Mary-Lee Bouma
BC South-East	Andrew Vander Leek
California South	Ron Chu
California South	John Berends
Central California	Lloyd Wicker
Columbia	Jelmer Groenewold
Eastern Canada	John Noordhof
Hackensack	John Algera
Hackensack	Jae Park
Hudson	David Sung
Hamilton	Michael Fallon
Hamilton	Chris Schoon
Hamilton	Syd Hielema
Hudson	Hong-Suk Kim
Huron	John Vanderstoep
Huron	Ralph Wigboldus
lakota	Al Kuiper
Illiana	Cal Aardsma
Illiana	Laryn Zoerhof
Northern Illinois	John Schuurman
Pacific Northwest	Ken Koeman

B. An exciting number of candidates

Another development in the past few years has been the large number of candidates for ministry. In the thirty years before 2008, the CRC rarely had more than forty candidates in a given year. (There were only two years with 40 candidates, and one year with 48 candidates—the average number of candidates was in the low 30s.)

In each of the past five years from 2008 through 2012, we have been blessed by having more than forty candidates. The year 2013 continues this trend. While some persons consider this to be a problem, we prefer to view it as a wonderful blessing. It is a response to continuing prayers for “harvest workers” (see Matt. 9:37-38).

We recognize, of course, that this trend presents a challenge for both the churches and the candidates, adding to other, related challenges of pastoral placement. Our calling process goes slower than ever before in our history, and this complicates ministry placement. Our capacity to support full-time workers in our churches and ministries has been diminished by a lagging economy. There are trends that bring relief to these issues: more candidates are seeking “tent-making ministry opportunities,” and more are open to ministry within institutional settings where their support comes from a hospital, prison, military, or industrial agency.

Our Candidacy Committee is attending to these challenges as best it can. We encourage those approaching candidacy to have realistic expectations regarding the process before them, and we encourage them to find supporters who will walk with them through the transitional period ahead of them.

We are glad to report that most candidates do, in fact, find ministry placements. Of the sixty-one people approved by Synod 2011 as new and continuing candidates, twenty three were presented to Synod 2012 for continuing candidacy. Only five of these twenty-three had been waiting for more than a year; most had been approved as first-time candidates in 2011. Three of these five were not fully focused on finding a ministry placement due to other life commitments. One of the five was significantly impeded by regional limitations. And the other one of these five received and accepted a call to ministry in late summer 2012.

We offer these extensive comments because concern is often expressed to us on behalf of the candidates. Related to these comments is a concern about honoring the commitments implied in Article 8, which we address later in this report. We encourage the churches to lift up our candidates in prayer and to think creatively regarding the ways we can put to use their eagerness to serve the Lord and his church.

C. Progress in training others who are entering pastoral service

Although our overall membership numbers as a denomination appear to be rather stagnant, or even in decline, the statistics regarding ethnic minority ministry are tremendously encouraging. Each year we welcome more ethnic minority churches and church members. We are developing effective vehicles for enlisting and welcoming pastors for these communities.

Orientation programs for these pastors include (1) a one-week orientation called "Welcome to the CRC"; (2) a Korean-language program called KIM (Korean Institute for Ministry), now in its seventh year; (3) a developing plan for a pilot program coordinated with KIM for leaders from other ethnic minority groups; and (4) the development of Korean-, Spanish-, and Chinese-language resources for ministry leaders in North America, especially our creeds and confessions and our Church Order, as mentioned in our report to synod last year.

D. Website updates

In fall 2012, the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org) underwent a facelift, involving the webpages of each of the ministries of the denomination. The Candidacy Committee webpage received a new look consistent with the redesign of the rest of the denominational site. The Candidacy Committee used the timing of this update to also give an update to the core material guiding the ordination processes. The document approved by Synod 2006, now called "The Journey Toward Ordination" (see *Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 318-61) has now been re-formatted. The contents are basically the same, but rather than appearing as a 103-page document, it now appears as a 26-page document. The pages that are no longer in the document are the forms and instructions for the various routes to ordination. These pages now appear on the candidacy website as individual downloadable documents, presented in a more user-friendly format. The Candidacy Committee welcomes any suggestions for improvement of the candidacy webpages or the forms and documents being used.

IV. Proposals for consideration by synod

A. Regarding the office of commissioned pastor

Synod 2012 approved a recommendation of the Candidacy Committee that the title of the office regulated by Church Order Articles 23 and 24 be changed from *ministry associate* to *commissioned pastor*. This change is consistent with a very long evolution of our denominational understanding and use of this office.

For a significant period of time, the CRC did not officially recognize as ministers those who were not formally trained for ministry. Through the 1970s, 1980s, and to the present, our denomination has taken significant steps to recognize and regulate the ordained ministry of persons not formally trained. The notes found within the Appendix to this report demonstrate the progression of the office now called *commissioned pastor*.

Throughout this discussion two concerns have been held in healthy tension. First, as a denomination we want to maintain our commitment to a well-trained clergy. Second, we want to be responsive to the needs of ministry in the local church. Pastoral ordination is often desired for spiritual leaders not trained in the traditional manner. The church wants to use such persons, and the pressure to allow their use has been great. The church also wants to maintain a commitment to formal theological education, so the "counterpressure" has also been great.

The Candidacy Committee has been charged by synod with offering guidance in this discussion. (Note the revision to the Candidacy Committee mandate as recorded in the *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 662.) In response to

this directive of synod, the Candidacy Committee regularly reflects on the development of this office. The committee has presented proposals to synod in recent years, and we have come to the point where we present two more proposals for synod's consideration. We have made a concerted effort to gather the input of people throughout the denomination relative to these proposals, and the proposals reflect that input. Our conviction is that these proposals will serve the church by (1) offering clarity regarding the nature of this office and (2) offering helpful implementation of standards for those who serve as solo pastors in emerging and established churches through this office. The Candidacy Committee believes that these two proposals are not significant in nature, and can therefore be approved by Synod 2013 without waiting an additional year.

1. Proposed revision to Church Order Article 23-a

That synod approve the following change to Church Order Article 23-a (additions in **bold**; deletions in ~~strikethrough~~):

Commissioned pastors shall be acknowledged as **such in elders of** ~~their calling churches with corresponding privileges and responsibilities~~. Normally, their work **on the church council as elders** shall be limited to the ministries in which they serve as commissioned pastors.

Grounds:

- a. These changes make more explicit the recognition that commissioned pastors serve the church as pastors, and describe how they currently function in the church.
- b. These changes maintain the desire expressed when synod first recognized the office that commissioned pastors serve on the church council for matters that pertain to their work (see *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 74-78).
- c. These changes also maintain the limitation of commissioned pastors relative to the council, making explicit that their involvement is normally limited to their particular area of ministry.
- d. These changes are consistent with the desire of Synod 2007 that synod give more use, more value, and more support for this office (see *Agenda for Synod 2007*, pp. 298-303).

2. Proposed revision to Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a

That synod approve the following addition to Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a (to be inserted after the opening paragraph in Supplement, Article 23-a):

Before a person who will serve as the solo pastor of an emerging or an organized church is examined for a position as a commissioned pastor, that person shall complete a contextualized learning plan, adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee. Ordinarily the learning plan would include an introduction to the CRC Church Order, CRC history, CRC ministry, CRC creeds and confessions, Reformed hermeneutics, and an introduction to the discipline and art of preaching.

Grounds:

- a. This ensures that those who provide primary spiritual leadership in CRC congregations have been adequately trained in the basic denominational information that the church expects of its primary spiritual leaders.
 - b. This enables a classis to have flexibility in the training mechanisms it uses for commissioned pastors, as a given learning plan can include many elements and learning experiences.
 - c. This balances local flexibility and contextual sensitivity with a denominational voice via the Candidacy Committee, which is advantageous for consistency in denominational awareness among leaders in the CRC.
3. Church Order Supplement, Article 45-b, 2
- There is one more matter relative to the office of commissioned pastor that the Candidacy Committee has discussed. It pertains to an area of awkwardness with our current practice regarding the delegation of commissioned pastors to synod. Currently, according to Church Order Supplement, Article 45-b, 2, commissioned pastors attend synod as minister delegates only if they are serving as a solo pastor of an established church. Most commissioned pastors who attend synod do so as elder delegates. The present guideline creates the following problems:
- a. This practice dishonors these commissioned pastors relative to their recognition as pastors.
 - b. This practice adds to the problem of clergy/pastor dominance at synod. Too easily classes are sending pastoral staff rather than lay elders to synod. Some classes contribute to this by sending three or four ministers of the Word as delegates, one or two being designated as elder delegates. Those classes that want to honor and include commissioned pastors in the synod process have no choice but to send them as elder delegates.

The Candidacy Committee has not come to the point where it has a solution to advance relative to this matter. Rather, it is our belief that placing the matter before the church by means of this report may serve to stimulate some healthy discussion within the denomination regarding this issue.

B. Response to the request of Synod 2012

The following comment regarding the use of Church Order Article 17-a made its way into the *Acts of Synod 2012* (p. 799):

B. Communication from synodical deputies R. Koops (Hamilton), C.N. Overduin (Toronto), and J.J. Hoytema (Niagara) includes the following comment: As synodical deputies, we are distressed about the increased use of Article 17-a by churches and pastors.

Recommendation: That synod instruct the councils and classes of the CRCNA as well as the president and board of Calvin Theological Seminary and the CRCNA's Candidacy Committee to take note of this comment.

Within the membership of the Candidacy Committee there is a sense of confusion over this request because neither the Calvin Theological Seminary

(CTS) board nor the denominational Candidacy Committee has any jurisdiction over Church Order Article 17-a. Neither do we have jurisdiction over the classes and synodical deputies who administer that article.

We recognize that synod was likely trying to honor the input of the synodical deputies, as indicated in their note. We also recognize that in calling this matter to the attention of the president and board of CTS and the Candidacy Committee, there was likely a desire to promote healthy life among our pastors and churches.

The issue of distressed and dysfunctional relationships between pastors and churches is surely one that is worthy of attention. Our committee has, indeed, discussed this matter as synod requested. We sense an alarm among the churches relative to the increasing challenges faced by congregations and pastors. The use of Article 17 is often an indication that these challenges have resulted in an intolerable degree of frustration or dissonance on the part of the pastor or the congregation or both.

As a committee we recognized another element in the Article 17 discussion that we believe is worthy of synodical attention. We believe that many of the cases of increasing use of Article 17-a are indications of healthy interaction between pastors and churches, rather than causes of distress. We believe our denomination is in the midst of a culture change regarding the use of this Church Order article, as has been pointed out by Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis of Pastor-Church Relations (see “The Scarlet Number,” *The Banner*, March 2012). It is regrettable if our discussions of Article 17 stigmatize the churches and pastors who use this article. Thus we ask Synod 2013 to approve the following additional recommendation in response to the note of the synodical deputies cited in the *Acts of Synod 2012*:

That synod refer synodical deputies, church councils, church visiting teams, and classes of the CRC to *The Banner* article on the uses of Church Order Article 17 that appeared in the March 2012 issue, and encourage the church to recognize that there are many uses of Article 17-a that indicate a healthy relationship between pastors and churches.

C. Concern regarding the pastoral search process and Church Order Article 8-d

One particular area of responsibility given to the Candidacy Committee is coordination of the Article 8 ordination process—the process used for the affiliation of those ordained in other denominations. The process is frequently used for the ethnic minority congregations in our denomination, as our supply of pastors and our seminary track for these congregations is not adequate. This process is also used often for pastors from other denominations who wish to plant a church in partnership with the CRCNA. The Candidacy Committee gives near immediate support to such proposed ministry assignments, as long as there are other partners that have participated in the proposal (such as Christian Reformed Home Missions and the respective classis, through an assessment of ministry gifts for church planting).

In recent years there has been a trend developing in which search committees and church councils from “majority culture” congregations seek early in their search process to make use of Article 8. Church Order Article 8 clearly stipulates that there be a “sustained and realistic effort to obtain a minister from within the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America” (Church Order Supplement, Art. 8, E, 1). Further, the Church

Order says that “a council shall not nominate a minister from another denomination for a call without the approval of its classis and the Candidacy Committee” (Church Order Supplement, Art. 8, E, 3). These statements in the Church Order ensure that students preparing for ministry in the CRCNA will have available ministry opportunities in the CRCNA when they conclude their studies, and these statements also ensure that pastors who feel that it is time to move to a new ministry assignment are given opportunity to consider such assignments within the CRCNA.

The Candidacy Committee has been experiencing a trend in the churches in which these expectations regarding Article 8 have been disregarded. Search committees and church councils are more and more considering as their first candidate a person not ordained in the CRC or RCA and not on the list of synodically approved candidates. These local committees and councils often do not ask for advice on this from their classis-appointed counselor, and at times when they have, the counselor has not directed them away from this strategy. By the time the Candidacy Committee has opportunity to be involved, the “nonapproved” pastor has at times already been called or even moved into a parsonage.

We believe there are at least three factors behind this trend: (1) many mainline denominations have an oversupply of ordained pastors, so there are a large number of non-CRC pastors looking at our websites and even *The Banner* for notices of available positions; (2) search committees—and even appointed classis counselors—are less and less aware of the covenantal agreements implied in Church Order, so they proceed without malice along a path that disregards our Church Order covenant; and (3) many of our congregations see themselves as unique ministries in need of a pastor they assume they will not find within the denominationally approved pool, and, lacking aggressive and informed guidance, they search for a pastor with a broader net than should be used by the agreements of Article 8.

In our work we have had at least five occasions in the past three years in which confusion and even controversy has been experienced as we have tried to uphold the requirement for a “sustained and realistic” search. We have called synod’s attention to this issue in our reports to Synods 2010 and 2012. Yet we see the trend continue. We are concerned, both on behalf of the large numbers of candidates with whom we have been blessed, and on behalf of the large number of qualified pastors who are working faithfully but hoping for an opportunity for a new assignment. Our concern could also extend to congregations who are feeling that it is time for their pastor to move on, but their pastor has limited options to move.

We feel it is advisable at this time for synod to make an official statement regarding this matter, so that the reminders we continue to give have a stronger degree of authority. Thus we ask Synod 2013 to approve the following statement with grounds as stated:

That synod remind all churches, pastor search committees, counselors of vacant churches, and church visitors of our covenantal commitment to each other as expressed in Church Order Article 8 (see Art. 8-d, and Supplement, Art. 8, E, 1 and 3). Churches are to engage in meaningful pastoral search conversations with pastors ordained outside of the CRC and RCA only after consulting with the Candidacy Committee.

Grounds:

1. The Article 8 requirement that churches engage in a “sustained and realistic search” among current candidates and ordained CRC and RCA pastors has been disregarded by some churches in recent years.
2. The CRC currently has a large number of candidates and available ordained ministers of the Word, making it all the more crucial that we keep our commitment to them.
3. Church Order Article 8 does not prohibit searching congregations from enlisting the pastoral services of qualified, godly individuals, but does so in an ordered way that is of benefit to the denomination, our seminary, our congregations, and the pastors who serve us.

The Candidacy Committee wants to remind synod of its report given to Synod 2012 as it relates to this issue. We observe in that report that even while seeking to keep the covenants we have just described, the committee does not wish to create an insular perspective toward qualified and devout pastors ordained in other denominations who wish to serve among us. We have recommended that such pastors enroll in the EPMC program, which is now available even as a nonresident program, so that they can become a candidate for ministry alongside others who have been fully trained and vetted as available candidates. Pastors who take this route are able to eventually serve in the CRC and enter potential service on a even field with other candidates.

V. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. David R. Koll, director of Candidacy, when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint two members to the Candidacy Committee from the nominees as presented, and reappoint the two members eligible for a second three-year term.
- C. That synod approve the following change to Church Order Article 23-a (additions in bold; deletions in ~~strikethrough~~):

Commissioned pastors shall be acknowledged as **such in elders of** ~~their calling churches with corresponding privileges and responsibilities~~. Normally, their work **on the church council as elders** shall be limited to the ministries in which they serve as commissioned pastors.

Grounds:

1. These changes make more explicit the recognition that commissioned pastors serve the church as pastors, and describe how they currently function in the church.
2. These changes maintain the desire expressed when synod first recognized the office that commissioned pastors serve on the church council for matters that pertain to their work (see *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 74-78).
3. These changes also maintain the limitation of commissioned pastors relative to the council, making explicit that their involvement is normally limited to their particular area of ministry.

4. These changes are consistent with the desire of Synod 2007 that synod give more use, more value, and more support for this office (see *Agenda for Synod 2007*, pp. 298-303).

D. That synod approve the following addition to Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a (to be inserted after the opening paragraph in Supplement, Article 23-a):

Before a person who will serve as the solo pastor of an emerging or an organized church is examined for a position as a commissioned pastor, that person shall complete a contextualized learning plan, adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee. Ordinarily the learning plan would include an introduction to the CRC Church Order, CRC history, CRC ministry, CRC creeds and confessions, Reformed hermeneutics, and an introduction to the discipline and art of preaching.

Grounds:

1. This ensures that those who provide primary spiritual leadership in CRC congregations have been adequately trained in the basic denominational information that the church expects of its primary spiritual leaders.
2. This enables a classis to have flexibility in the training mechanisms it uses for commissioned pastors, as a given learning plan can include many elements and learning experiences.
3. This balances local flexibility and contextual sensitivity with a denominational voice via the Candidacy Committee, which is advantageous for consistency in denominational awareness among leaders in the CRC.

E. That synod refer synodical deputies, church councils, church visiting teams, and classes of the CRCNA to *The Banner* article on the uses of Church Order Article 17 that appeared in the March 2012 issue, and encourage the church to recognize that there are many uses of Article 17-a that indicate a healthy relationship between pastors and churches.

F. That synod remind all churches, pastor search committees, counselors of vacant churches, and church visitors of our covenantal commitment to each other as expressed in Church Order Article 8 (see Art. 8-d, and Supplement, Art. 8, E, 1 and 3). Churches are to engage in meaningful pastoral search conversations with pastors ordained outside of the CRC and RCA only after consulting with the Candidacy Committee.

Grounds:

1. The Article 8 requirement that churches engage in a “sustained and realistic search” among current candidates and ordained CRC and RCA pastors has been disregarded by some churches in recent years.
2. The CRC currently has a large number of candidates and available ordained ministers of the Word, making it all the more crucial that we keep our commitment to them.
3. Church Order Article 8 does not prohibit searching congregations from enlisting the pastoral services of qualified, godly individuals, but does

so in an ordered way that is of benefit to the denomination, our seminary, our congregations, and the pastors who serve us.

G. That synod take note of the various initiatives and challenges identified by the Candidacy Committee as noted in this report.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

Appendix

Development of the Use of Church Order Article 23

Note: The Candidacy Committee is grateful for the work of Dr. Henry De Moor, as presented in his *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, published by Faith Alive in 2010. The sections on Articles 23 and 24 (pp. 121-31) provided very helpful substance for the review that follows.

1920s – 1940s: The CRC makes use of nonordained persons for significant evangelism work in domestic and world mission settings. Synod 1920 provisionally adopts a pension plan for these unordained workers, yet Synod 1946 resists acknowledging a special office, with concern that standards of ministry preparation not be compromised.

1950s – 1970s: Use of nonordained workers continues and broadens with the “chapel movement” in domestic CRC missions.

1978: Synod officially recognizes a fourth office, calling it the office of evangelist. A majority report wants to incorporate this work into the role of elder; a minority report seeks to create a fourth office. The decision of synod represents a combination of the two positions.

1980s – 1990s: The office of evangelist is expanded beyond that of church planter. Synod 1987 allows evangelists to continue serving in a congregation for a “reasonable period of transition” once the church plant becomes organized. Synod 1994 expands the office to include possible service in “an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word.”

2000: In the context of discussion about routes to ministry, synod affirms a denominational commitment to a theologically well-trained clergy (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 702). Synod 2000 also gives approval to the “character, knowledge, and skill” standards that are eventually inserted into Church Order Supplement, Article 23 by Synod 2003.

2001: Synod asserts that the office “may be understood to have the character of pastoral extension” (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 506), recognizing a variety of positions that may qualify under the office. “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” (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 506).

2002: Synod ratifies the changes to Article 55 that allow evangelists to administer the sacraments if this function fits in their job description (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 537).

2003: Synod approves a change in title from *evangelist* to *ministry associate*, largely in response to the desire of those ordained in the office serving

as chaplains. Their concern is that the term *evangelist*, when used in chaplaincy settings, evoked images of “proselytizing” rather than compassion and ministry to needs (*Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 610-11).

2007 and 2008: Synod addresses and defines more broadly the circumstances under which a ministry associate may be permitted to serve as a solo pastor of an organized congregation (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 520).

2012: Synod approves the change of title from *ministry associate* to *commissioned pastor* (*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 741-42).

I. Introduction

After several very busy and intense years of facilitating the denomination's discussion of the Belhar Confession, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) had a relatively quiet and routine year since Synod 2012. That is not to say the state of our ecumenical relationships is static—it really never is. Increasingly, the EIRC realizes that the CRC is part of a global faith community and that our ecumenical relationships are ongoing and vital with many connections. The EIRC is privileged and honored to represent the CRC in these relationships. Some of our ecumenical relationships are institutional and formal, while others are established and fostered through more casual encounters. But whatever the venues—major ecclesiastical assemblies, multilateral associations, worship halls, denominational offices, or coffee shops—"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) is experienced and celebrated.

The Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church is the foundational statement of the CRC that guides the EIRC in nurturing ecumenical relations. The relationships we maintain are not exclusively with denominations identical to the CRC. In fact, there is considerable diversity in our fellowship, not only in our church-to-church relationships but also through our affiliation in ecumenical organizations. When one considers our participation in the Canadian Council of Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the National Association of Evangelicals, Christian Churches Together, the Global Christian Forum, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches, one can sense that the reality of our relationships is more than a confessional expression. Followers of Jesus from a wide variety of traditions, languages, and politics can stand together in obedience and service. When we hear the respect and appreciation that is given to the CRC and we show respect and appreciation for our brothers and sisters in other denominational families, we give thanks and praise to God for the way his Spirit continues to break down the walls of division that have so often marked the history of the church. For every expression of unity in Christ, we give thanks.

The two-part name of this committee (*ecumenical* and *interfaith*) shows that there are two dimensions to the mandate given by synod. Both are significant and are clearly distinct. Ecumenical relationships exist between the CRC and other Christian traditions. Interfaith dialogue takes place between the Christian churches and faith traditions that have a non-Christian tradition. The EIRC is careful to differentiate between the two activities, and it seeks to assist the members and congregations of our denomination to do likewise.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2013, are Rev. Pedro Aviles (2013/2); Dr. Emily Brink (2013/2); Dr. Jay Shim (2014/1); Ms. Debra Ortiz-Vásquez (2013/1); Dr. Shirley Roels (2015/2); Rev. Peter Slofstra (2013/2), vice-chair; Ms. Rebecca Warren (2014/2), chair; Dr. James Payton (2015/1); Dr. Robert Sweetman (2015/1); and Rev. Karen Norris (2015/1).

Rev. Joel Boot and Dr. Peter Borgdorff serve as ex officio members of the EIRC. Dr. William T. Koopmans serves as an ecumenical officer in Canada while the position of director of Canadian ministries remains unfilled.

The EIRC met in September 2012 and January 2013. Typically the meeting locations alternate between Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario.

III. Nominations for membership

The first term of Ms. Debra Ortiz-Vásquez ends June 30, 2013, and she is eligible for a second term. The EIRC heartily recommends her to synod for reappointment to a second term.

The second term of Rev. Peter Slofstra also concludes June 30, 2013, but, because Rev. Slofstra serves the EIRC as the representative on the Canadian Council of Churches, the EIRC requests synod to extend Rev. Slofstra's term for one year.

The committee recommends that synod appoint the following members to a three-year term of service on the EIRC:

Rev. Emmett Harrison attended Chicago State University and Chicago Baptist Institute for advanced training in urban ministry. He has served the church for twenty-three years in one form or another and currently is the lead pastor at Oakdale Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Harrison has been a five-time delegate to synod and served as vice president of Synod 2004. He also served on several synodical and classical study committees, on the board of Christian Reformed Home Mission (as vice president), and was president of Classis Lake Erie.

Mr. Anthony Elenbaas holds a bachelor of arts degree from Alma College and currently plans to complete his M.Div. at Calvin Theological Seminary in May 2013. He has served on the leadership board of Alma College Chapel and is currently serving on the chapel planning committee at Calvin Theological Seminary. Mr. Elenbaas also served as a steward at the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) Uniting General Council in 2010 and as a steward at the World Council of Churches Central Committee in February 2011. He attended the Christian Churches Together meetings in 2011 and 2012 and participated in the Global Institute of Theology of the WCRC in 2012.

IV. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

The EIRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches and ecumenical organizations with which the CRC has a relationship or has membership:

1. To the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) General Assembly, Rev. Lawrence Spalink.
2. To the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), Rev. Joel R. Boot.
3. To the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

4. To the Korean Presbyterian Church (Hapdong), Rev. Joel R. Boot and Dr. Jay Shim.
5. To the regional meeting of the WCRC (CANAAC), Dr. William T. Koopmans.
6. To the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Dr. William T. Koopmans and Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the provisions of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the EIRC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These gatherings often provide occasions to connect with representatives of churches with which the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship or dialogue, and members of the EIRC take every opportunity to make those connections.

1. Rev. Joel R. Boot serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Rev. Peter Slofstra serves as the CRCNA's representatives on the governing board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC).
3. Rev. Joel R. Boot and Dr. Peter Borgdorff serve as the CRCNA's representatives to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).
4. Dr. William T. Koopmans represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
5. Dr. William T. Koopmans serves as an adviser to the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as a member of the executive committee and also serves on the search committee for a new general secretary to replace the retiring Dr. Setri Nyomi.
6. Rev. Joel R. Boot serves as the CRCNA's representative to the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as a member of the North American Foundation of the GCF.
7. Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as a member of the board of Sojourners.

V. Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations

A. World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

The WCRC as a global ecumenical organization is composed of 230 denominations, all of which have roots in the Reformed tradition and subscribe to the historic Reformed confessions. Together these denominations have a membership of more than 80 million people. With offices presently located in Geneva, Switzerland (but scheduled to be relocated to Hanover, Germany later in 2013), the WCRC is dedicated to building “communion” and relationships among its member churches and to bearing witness to and for those in the world who suffer from all forms of oppression. The latter is summarized and designated in a “commitment to justice” that is deeply rooted in our biblical understanding of what it means to be God’s agents of mercy in his world.

The CRC is represented in the governance of the WCRC through the participation of Drs. William T. Koopmans and Peter Borgdorff, both of whom serve the executive committee of WCRC. While the theological span of the WCRC member churches is broad—and the cultural influences in the organization are globally diverse—it is a privilege for the CRC to be engaged in such a global expression of the body of Christ.

B. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The CRC is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is a national association of evangelical Christians in Canada and offers a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society. The EFC focuses on bringing evangelical 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 and the courts on current issues of interest and concern.

C. Canadian Council of Churches

The CRC in Canada is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), the largest ecumenical organization in Canada. The CCC works primarily through its commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has representation 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. The EIRC has appointed a number of CRC members to be our denomination's representatives on a variety of commissions and committees of the CCC. Rev. Peter Slofstra serves on the board of the CCC.

D. KAIROS – Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

While this is not officially classified as an “ecumenical” organization, it functions as one. KAIROS is dedicated to promoting human rights, justice and peace, viable human development, and solidarity. The CRC's participation is currently funded through the Office of Canadian Ministries. Together the members of KAIROS focus on the continuation of Christ's ministry and mission in the world. Presently Mr. Ben Vandezande, interim director of Canadian ministries, is conducting an assessment of the CRC's future role in the KAIROS partnership.

E. National Association of Evangelicals (USA)

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) meets twice each year, where representatives of evangelical denominations, ministries, and congregations discuss matters of common interest and concern. 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 such as immigration reform.

F. Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. and the Global Christian Forum

Since fall 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 Christian 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 Historic Ethnic. The global expression of this same ecumenical configuration, with perhaps even a more diverse participation, is the Global Christian Forum. Both CCT and the GCF represent an emerging trend in ecumenical formation. The facts that we live in a global village today and that this world needs a more unified Christian witness make these expressions an exciting frontier in ecumenical engagement.

VI. Bilateral relationships

Relationships with other denominations are an important part of the CRC's witness in and to the body of Jesus Christ. The CRC is in regular contact with many of the denominations by means of their representatives who gather at a variety of ecumenical events throughout the year. Partnerships and ministry alliances of various kinds allow the CRC to be a participant—and to exercise its voice—in meaningful ways. Continuing contact and consistent interaction make these relationships meaningful and effective.

VII. Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue

With the adoption of the Common Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism by Synod 2011, the agreement was publicly signed and celebrated at a worship service in Austin, Texas, on January 29, 2013. Rev. Joel R. Boot represented the CRC in the ceremony. The dialogue participants proposed (and the EIRC reports to synod) that the next consultation focus on (1) unity and diversity in the church, (2) the origins and current interpretations of ministry and ordination, and (3) the nature and role of authority and the episcopacy. The dialogue group has begun to meet, and the current participants are Dr. Susan Rozeboom, Dr. Ronald Feenstra, and Dr. Peter Choi.

VIII. Interfaith dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is a relatively new responsibility for the EIRC, and care continues to be taken to differentiate interfaith dialogue from ecumenical engagement.

A task force was appointed to discern what kinds of resources would be helpful for the congregations and members of the CRC in participating appropriately and confidently in dialogue with people who adhere to a different faith. The task force completed its assignment and developed a “frequently asked questions” segment and has posted an essay titled “Reformed Christian Engagement with People of Different Faith.” These resources are available on the CRC website at www.crcna.org/EIRC. The EIRC continues to explore how to make this part of our mandate a more dynamic reality.

EIRC member Dr. James Payton serves on the National (Canada) Muslim-Christian Liaison Committee.

IX. The Belhar Confession

Synod 2012 adopted the Belhar Confession as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration (EFD). Our ecumenical partners, for the most part, have not yet officially responded to the decision of Synod 2012. Informal responses have mostly been expressions of disappointment that the CRC did not adopt the

Belhar Confession as a fourth confession. If and when more official responses are received, a report will be forwarded at a later time.

The EIRC, in the light of synod's decision, has further discussed the meaning of what an EFD really is. Synod 2012 did not define the category it named *Ecumenical Faith Declaration*. It seemed to the EIRC that the definition of an EFD should be clarified in consultation with at least the churches with whom we maintain ecclesiastical fellowship. Consequently, the committee developed a preliminary definition of an EFD and sent it to selected ecumenical partners for their response. The EIRC will continue to dialogue with the responding churches and report to a future synod the lessons learned. As an item of interest, the preliminary description of an EFD is attached in Appendix A.

X. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and ecumenical visitors at synod

A. *Ecumenical visitors*

The CRC maintains a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with a wide range of Reformed denominations. A complete list of such churches is attached in Appendix B. Some churches are in a less formal relationship with the CRC; however, those relationships are no less important than others. Additionally the CRC participates in a number of multilateral associations. An exchange of ecumenical delegates at meetings of the broader assemblies is a common occurrence, usually on a rotating schedule, and Synod 2013 will again share in that experience. It is expected that Synod 2013 will welcome visitors from Africa, North America (both Canada and the United States), and possibly other parts of the world. These guests will be introduced to synod and share in its fellowship. The EIRC and the officers of Synod 2013 will host these delegates at a special luncheon on Tuesday, June 11, 2013.

In the past each of these ecumenical delegates were afforded an opportunity to also address synod. Since there is no synodical regulation for such addresses, the EIRC has decided that such addresses will no longer be regularly scheduled. There may be occasions in the future when an exception is desirable, but at the present time the practice of each delegate addressing the assembly will be discontinued.

B. *Reformed Church in America (RCA)*

The CRC's relationship with the RCA deserves special mention. Not only do we share a common heritage, a fact that makes the RCA one of our closest ecumenical partners, but in addition, the RCA and the CRC cooperate and collaborate in a variety of ministries and support services. Until now, these cooperative ventures have arisen, and have been implemented, on an ad hoc basis. The respective synods have on several occasions encouraged cooperation and joint ministry projects when feasible.

The scope of cooperation and collaboration that is possible suggests that a more coordinated approach is desirable. The executive director of the CRC and the general secretary of the RCA are in the process of designing, mandating, and appointing a CRC/RCA Collaboration Team that will exercise general oversight for the cooperative ventures. This arrangement is judged to be an improved administrative matter to compensate for the ad hoc manner in which agreements were made until now.

At a meeting of the RCA Commission on Christian Unity (CCU) with representatives of the CRC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, it was observed that while we are closely allied in various ways, there is no formal agreement between the respective synods to guide these alliances. In order to develop such a statement of agreement, it was agreed to request our respective synods to approve the appointment of a joint committee (three from the RCA and three from the CRC) to draft an appropriate resolution describing both churches' commitment to each other. Synod is requested to approve this initiative. The appointments to this committee will be made by the CCU for the RCA and by the EIRC for the CRC. It is appropriate and desirable that a joint resolution be presented and adopted at the simultaneous meetings of both synods planned for Pella, Iowa, in June 2014.

XI. Recommendations

A. That Ms. Rebecca Warren (chair), Rev. Joel R. Boot, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee are being discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Dr. Emily Brink and Rev. Pedro Aviles for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod appoint the Rev. Emmett Harrison and Mr. Anthony Elenbaas to serve on the EIRC, each for a three-year term.

D. That synod by way of the ballot reelect Ms. Debra Ortiz-Vasquez to the EIRC for a second three-year term and permit Rev. Peter Slofstra to serve one additional year.

E. That synod note the observations in Appendix A and adopt the criteria therein regarding an Ecumenical Faith Declaration (EFD) in order to guide the EIRC in its implementation of the decisions by Synod 2012 on this matter.

F. That synod approve the appointment of an ad hoc committee to draft a statement of agreement about the collaborative relationship between the CRC and the RCA for approval by Synod 2014.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
Joel R. Boot, ecumenical officer
Peter Borgdorff, ecumenical officer
Rebecca Warren, chair

Appendix A **Ecumenical Faith Declaration (EFD)**

I. Background

Within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, we have historically had three confessions that form our standard of unity. In 2012, synod adopted a Covenant for Officebearers within the Christian Reformed Church. That document states,

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of

the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

The expectation inherent in the Covenant for Officebearers is consistent with a policy of confessional identity for officebearers that was previously delineated in the CRC's Form of Subscription.

By adopting the Covenant for Officebearers, synod reaffirmed the special status of the three confessions noted above. However, Synod 2012 also authorized a category termed "Ecumenical Faith Declaration." And, in related decisions, synod adopted the Belhar Confession within that new category and decided that future consideration of other documents possibly to be included in this category should be processed via the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) by means of a recommendation to and decision by synod. The relevant decisions are included in the Addendum below.

While some of the aspects and implications of those synodical decisions are clear and straightforward, there are other details that warrant clarification. Like the CRC, some denominations have a long-standing history of affirming a similar list of confessions as standards of unity, while other churches do not have comparable categories or assign the same role to the creeds and confessions. The complexity of confessional standards is increased within the CRC by the adoption of the new category called "Ecumenical Faith Declaration" (EFD). It would be helpful for the CRC to engage in a deeper reflection upon the nature and role of documents that are or could be adopted as ecumenical faith declarations. It is also necessary to clarify the criteria by which they might be evaluated and adopted. Since these documents are considered ecumenical in nature, it would be of benefit to invite reactions and input from various ecumenical partners. The observations that follow are aimed at promoting such discussion within the CRC while also inviting ecumenical input.

II. Observations

Synod's adoption of a confessional category called "Ecumenical Faith Declaration" established a nomenclature that is not in general usage in the ecclesiastical community. With that category, synod also provided an avenue by which, in addition to the Belhar, other confessions might be adopted. For these reasons, and in anticipation of future discussions on such issues, it will be of value for synod to establish guidelines and principles that will be operative for future deliberations in this area.

In recognizing a category called "Ecumenical Faith Declaration" it was not the intent of Synod 2012 to begin a comprehensive process to evaluate already existing confessional documents that might possibly be added to this category. Synod's action was a response to a specific request regarding the Belhar Confession. In the history of the Christian church, hundreds of confessions have been written (cf. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*. 3 vols. Baker Books, 1984). While synod's action provides a way to deal with specific future requests to consider formal adoption of other confessional documents that might arise from an ecumenical setting, it was not intended

to create impetus to begin a proactive search for additional confessions for formal recognition by the CRCNA.

Synod 2012 implicitly indicated guidelines for delimiting future consideration of additional confessions by referring to such confessions or declarations “that speak to global realities and uniquely enable the CRCNA to formally state its commitment to and live out key biblical principles.” This statement reflects a number of elements. To be considered for adoption as an EFD, a declaration or confession, which would come to the CRC in an ecumenical setting, should meet the criteria of addressing global rather than only local realities, should provide a biblically sound statement on an important issue or issues, and should meet the criteria of relevance for living out key biblical principles.

Synod also decided “that after Synod 2012 the formal adoption of an Ecumenical Faith Declaration require the recommendation of the EIRC to synod for approval.” In this decision, it was not the intention of Synod 2012 to give a “veto power” to the EIRC with respect to the adoption of additional documents in the category of EFD. Rather, the EIRC was assigned a central role in the consideration process in order to specify the route that normally would be followed.

In summary of the considerations outlined above, we may anticipate, therefore, that the EIRC would be entrusted with the responsibility to facilitate an assessment of a declaration or confession that would come to the CRCNA in an ecumenical setting with a request for adoption. The EIRC would make a recommendation to synod on a given confession based on the following criteria—that the confession would

1. be harmonious with biblical principles and previously adopted confessions.
2. address global rather than only local realities.
3. be relevant for living out key biblical principles.
4. extend the confessional witness of the denomination in an area not already adequately covered by confessions, testimonies, and declarations previously adopted.
5. be beneficial and reliable to the Christian life of the denomination and its ecumenical relations.

III. Recommendation

That synod note these observations and adopt these criteria regarding an Ecumenical Faith Declaration (EFD) in order to guide the EIRC in its implementation of the decisions by Synod 2012 on this matter.

Addendum

The following paragraphs are excerpted from the *Acts of Synod 2012* (pp. 766-67) to note the decisions of Synod 2012 regarding Ecumenical Faith Declarations and the Belhar Confession:

3. That synod authorize a formal category called “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” (EFD).

- a. This category identifies declarations and statements of faith that speak to global realities and uniquely enable the CRCNA to formally state its commitment to and live out key biblical principles.
- b. Documents in this category, while important and contributing to the CRCNA's worldwide witness and ministry, are not considered part of the confessional basis of the CRCNA and, therefore, will not be listed in the Covenant for Officebearers.
4. That after Synod 2012 the formal adoption of an Ecumenical Faith Declaration require the recommendation of the EIRC to synod for approval.
5. That synod adopt the Belhar Confession and its accompanying documents (the Accompanying Letter from the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa and the joint statement of the RCA and CRC) as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration and recommend it to the churches for study and for incorporation of its themes into their discipling and liturgical ministries.

Grounds:

- a. The central themes of unity, justice, and reconciliation in the Belhar Confession reflect biblical teaching and are consistent with the historic Reformed confessions.
- b. The Belhar Confession addresses important issues that are also pertinent to the CRCNA's own history and context in North America.
- c. The three-year discussion of the Belhar Confession revealed a lack of consensus in support of adopting the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession on par with the historic confessions adopted by the CRCNA.
- d. The three-year discussion of the Belhar Confession revealed substantial support for the Belhar Confession to have an official status.

Appendix B

Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Formal Dialogue, and in Other Ecumenical Relationships

I. Provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship

- A. Encourage joint action in Christian endeavors, where possible, and a common Christian witness to the world.
- B. Explore whether the unity we share with such churches may include various forms of organizational expression. The shape of such organizational unity should be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
- C. Exchange fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- D. Engage in pulpit and table fellowship.
- E. Exercise mutual concern and encouragement with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
- F. Communicate on major issues of common concern.
- G. Remain aware of current developments to assure that such fellowship continues to grow in vibrancy.

Degrees of ecclesiastical fellowship may involve fewer than all seven elements. At present the Christian Reformed Church is in full fellowship with the churches listed below, unless otherwise indicated.

II. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

Following is a list of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, referencing the year in which such fellowship was established.

A. *Africa*

1. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) (1974)
2. Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv (NKST) (1974)
(Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan Hen Tiv)
3. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) (1983)
(Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika)
4. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) (2001)
(Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika)
5. Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) (1982)
6. Reformed Churches in South Africa (1974)
(Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)
7. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg) (1989)
8. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (2003)
9. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) (1982)
(Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika)

B. *Asia, Australia, and Indonesia*

1. Christian Church of Sumba (Indonesia) (1974)
(Gereja Kristen Sumba)
2. Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar (2011)
3. Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (1997)
4. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) (1974)
5. Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (1974)
6. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) (1974)

C. *Europe*

Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC) (1982)
(Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken-Buiten Verbond)

D. *North America*

1. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) (1986)
2. Reformed Church in America (RCA) (1976)

E. *Latin America*

Christian Reformed Church in Cuba (2001)
(La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba)

F. *South America*

1. Evangelical Reformed Church in Brazil (1974)
(Ireja Evangelica Reformada no Brasil)
2. Reformed Church in Argentina (1974)
(Iglesias Reformadas en le Argentina)

III. Churches in formal dialogue

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in *formal dialogue*. Following is a list of churches currently in *formal dialogue* with the CRC:

- A. *Christian Reformed Church in Eastern Africa (Uganda)*
- B. *Christian Reformed Church of Haiti*
- C. *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod) - Malawi*
- D. *Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar*
- E. *Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi*
- F. *Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)*
- G. *Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)*
- H. *Reformed Church in Zambia*
- I. *Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya)*

IV. Churches in other ecumenical relationships

- A. *Mennonite Church Canada*
- B. *Pentecostal Church of Uganda*
- C. *Presbyterian Church of India – Mizoram Synod*

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. The Committee's members are Ms. Angie Ploegstra (2013/2); Mr. William Sytsma (2013/2); Dr. Lyle Bierma, chair (2014/1); Dr. Robert Schoone-Jongen (2015/1); and Dr. Richard Harms (ex officio), secretary.

The committee thanks Ms. Angie Ploegstra and Mr. William Sytsma for completing two terms of faithful and dedicated service. We present the following slates of names for election to a first term:

Position 1

Dr. Kristin Kobes DuMez, from Sioux Center, Iowa, received degrees from Dordt College and the University of Notre Dame and teaches history and gender studies at Calvin College. Her research centers on the history of women and religion. In 2008 she supervised "Debates over Women in the CRC Oral History Project," funded by the Lilly Faculty Venture Vocational Grant.

Dr. Kate Van Liere has taught courses in European history at Calvin College since fall 1998, with particular interests in the Reformation period and the history of Spain. She has studied at Williams College, Cambridge University, and Princeton University. She is fluent in Spanish and Dutch, has taught frequently in the Calvin College Spanish Department, and will be teaching Dutch beginning in 2014.

Position 2

Rev. Paul Bremer is a native of West Michigan who has degrees from Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Princeton Seminary. He was ordained as a minister in the CRC in 1975 and has served his entire career on the faculty of Kuyper College. An avid scholar of Abraham Lincoln, Rev. Bremer spends his retirement time on various research projects, particularly helping to gather, organize, and catalog the historic files of Rehoboth Christian School.

Mr. George Heerema was born in Haledon, New Jersey, and graduated from the Eastern Christian Schools and Calvin College. In 2008 he retired from a forty-year career of teaching history, geography, and Bible at Zeeland Christian Middle School. Mr. Heerema has served on the Zeeland Historical Society and is currently a member of the Dutch Heritage Coordinating Council.

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the archives, housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. He serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College as archivist. Other staff include Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, library assistant; Ms. Laurie Haan, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; and Mr. Ben Rietema, student assistant. They are assisted by volunteers Dr. Paul Bremer, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Ralph Haan, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Mrs. Jeannette Smith, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

III. Archival work during 2012

Staff traveled to New Jersey and brought back 77 boxes (each one cubic foot) of records from Classes Hackensack and Hudson. The records had been gathered by the classes to preserve documents dating back to the 1820s, or 35 years before the denomination was organized. Included are records from churches, schools, and outreach and ministry efforts in the New Jersey and New York areas. The oldest documents are from the True Reformed Protestant Dutch Church that began in 1822 and joined the Christian Reformed Church in the 1890s. All the material from the former Northside CRC building had significant mold infestation and had to be cleaned with a fungicide; five boxes were so severely infested that they went to a professional for cleaning. Another five boxes had such extensive mold infestation that the records could not be salvaged; when possible, items from these boxes were copied. Of the remainder, three boxes of genealogical material (largely collected by Mr. Yske C. Spyksma) went to our family history collections, and nine boxes of books went to the Hekman Library. The contents of twenty-six boxes duplicated material already in our collection or in the library (minutes and anniversary booklets) and were thus recycled. The remaining thirty-one boxes held unique and important materials that were added to various denominational and church collections already in the archives. The committee thanks both classes and acknowledges the late Messrs. Spyksma and his son-in-law Arthur Steensma, who over a period of more than 80 years devoted time and effort to collecting and saving this invaluable and irreplaceable historical material.

Twenty boxes of records from church plants supported by CRC Home Missions from 1976 through 2006 were received and processed. We processed more than 145 boxes of the Vernon Ehlers papers that detail both his academic and political careers. Because the boxes contained much duplication and extraneous material, we were able to send the contents of 115 boxes to recycling, keeping only the contents of 30 boxes for the permanent collection. We completed the organization and cataloguing of all of our pictorials. Additions were made to the papers of Dirk Nieland (specialist in Yankee-Dutch language) and William Van Regenmorter (Michigan politician); the western Michigan Dobben family papers were added to the William Harry Jellema collection (the Dobbens were Jellema's maternal grandparents); and papers were also added to the collection of noted mathematician Jack B. Kuipers. We organized the papers of Cora Helen Roelofs Verbrugge that detail the lives of Dutch immigrants in western Michigan and Minnesota; the papers of, and documentation on, inventions by Chicago-area waste hauler William Venema; the papers of Robert Recker, professor at Calvin Theological Seminary; and those of John Olthoff. Finally, we processed the records of the Parchment (Mich.) CRC, a discontinued ministry.

Our volunteers continue working on the translation of the Holland, Michigan, Central Avenue CRC minutes. They also continue keying in data of vital records from *The Banner* and family data from the *Calvinist Contact*. After fifteen years of service, volunteer Mr. Fred Greidanus of Brampton, Ontario, has become unable to continue. The committee thanks and commends Mr. Greidanus for his faithful and diligent work on behalf of the denomination.

Among materials received during the year but not yet processed are 61 boxes of Calvin College records, 25 boxes of denominational records, and two boxes of Calvin Theological Seminary records. We received the papers of Martin LaMaire and James LaGrand, which provide further insight into the Lawndale-Timothy Christian School integration controversy of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Florence Schoolland DeRuiter donated a collection of early twentieth-century glass-plate negatives of Grand Rapids and Calvin College locations and people. The family of the late David DeHeer, professor of biology at Calvin College, donated his teaching and research files. In preparation for his retirement, Corwin Smidt has begun transferring his files.

In addition, we continue to review collections to determine whether their relevance and significance remain at levels meriting continued ongoing retention. Our main efforts in this work focused on our audio and video material on magnetic tape, which amount to more than 4,500 cassettes, 3,200 reel-to-reel recordings, 80 ¾-inch videos, and 2,000 ½-inch video recordings. This review was necessary because the life expectancy of magnetic tape is 25 years, and most of these items are at or past that mark. We concluded that approximately one-fourth of these items no longer merit retention; the remainder have been digitized and the tape formats discarded.

IV. Publications

We have electronically published another year of *Origins* (2009) via our webpage (www.calvin.edu/hh/origins/Origins_Main_Page.htm). In October, we completed scanning the 35 boxes of the Evan Runner collection to digital files (high-resolution .pdf files). The 1910 digital files occupy 22.2 billion bytes of space and are being used as a test to determine the advisability of scanning more of our manuscript collections. We have already had one researcher who purchased a portable hard drive and took a copy of the collection to conduct research at his home institution.

V. Space

In May 2012 we moved into our remodeled space on the main floor of the Hekman Library. We now have state-of-the-art temperature and humidity controls to mitigate potential water damage. Funds were provided by *Origins*, the Hekman Library, private donors, and Calvin College. Eleven rooms, two closets, and a hallway were opened into two storage areas and one work area. We now have storage space for at least ten years of growth and a large and well-appointed reading room that can accommodate twelve researchers (with the potential for temporarily adding six more seats if necessary) all using modern technology. The committee invites synodical delegates to tour the new facilities.

VI. Recognition

A. The committee acknowledges the following individuals who have served a combined 5,878 years in ordained ministry and will celebrate significant anniversaries during 2013:

72 years, 1941-2013	Gysbert J. Rozenboom
69 years, 1944-2013	Paul Han
68 years, 1945-2013	Edward Boer George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
67 years, 1946-2013	David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
66 years, 1947-2013	John A. De Kruyter Herman Minnema Clarence Van Ens
65 years, 1948-2013	Carl G. Kromminga, Sr. Peter M. Macaskill Howard B. Spaan
64 years, 1949-2013	John A. Petersen Albert J. Vanden Pol
63 years, 1950-2013	Lugene A. Bazuin Martin D. Geleyense Dick C. Los Lammert Slofstra Leonard F. Stockmeier
62 years, 1951-2013	Isaac J. Apol Gerard Bouma Willis P. De Boer Jacob Hekman Leonard J. Hofman Jacob Kuntz MyungJae Lee John T. Malestein John C. Medendorp Leonard Sweetman Clarence J. Vos Wilmer R. Witte
61 years, 1952-2013	Ralph D. Baker William D. Buursma Harold De Groot John H. Elenbaas Raymond R. Graves John M. Hofman Herman Leestma Chester M. Schemper Richard D. Sytsma Rits Tadema Samuel Vander Jagt Benjamin Ypma

60 years, 1953-2013	Harry G. Arnold Jacob P. Boonstra Peter W. Brouwer Herman Hoekstra William A. Huyser Bassam M. Madany Bernard J. Niemeyer Kenneth R. Slager John W. Van Stempvoort Theodore Verseput Andrew Zylstra
55 years, 1958-2013	Raymond Brinks Ralph A. Bruxvoort Sidney Draayer Roger S. Greenway Donald J. Griffioen Kenneth L. Havert Allan H. Jongsma Henry T. Karsten John Koopmans Andrew Kuyvenhoven Ted Medema Edward P. Meyer Theodore Minnema Alvin A. Mulder Bernard W. Mulder Garrett H. Stoutmeyer Levern L. Tanis Thomas Vanden Bosch Jack L. Vander Laan Arie G. Van Eck Donald W. Van Gent
50 years, 1961-2011	Alvin Beukema (The committee's report to Synod 2011 failed to include Rev. Beukema. We apologize for this and include him here.)
50 years, 1963-2013	Clarence Bishop Warren J. Boer Peter Breedveld Peter W. De Bruyne Evert Gritter Jack S. Hielema Robert J. Holwerda Menno S. Jorritsma Carroll E. Keegstra Jim Kok William H. Kooienga Dick Kwantes

Donald H. Postema
 Paul H. Redhouse
 Robert D. Ruis
 Gerrit W. Sheeres
 Dick M. Stravers
 Edward J. Tamminga
 Alvin J. Vander Griend
 Adrian A. Van Geest
 H. Aubrey Van Hoff
 Frederick J. Walhof
 John J. Wiegers
 Woon S. Yeo

B. We report the following anniversaries of ministries will occur during 2013:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 125 years, 1888-2013 | Baldwin, WI |
| 100 years, 1913-2013 | Holland, MN
Kalamazoo, MI – Comstock
Ochevedan, IA
Valentine, NE – Lakeview
Worthington, MN |
| 75 years, 1938-2013 | Artesia, CA – First
Dearborn, MI – Dearborn Christian Fellowship
Dorr, MI
Lynden, WA – Third
Newmarket, ON – Holland Marsh
Pipestone, MN
Randolph, WI – Second
Raymond, MN
Western Springs, IL |
| 50 years, 1963-2013 | Boulder, CO – Crestview
Chicago, IL – Lawndale
Hayward, CA – Christ’s Community
Kentwood, MI – Princeton
Oshawa, ON – Zion
Sacramento, CA – Living Stones
Toronto, ON – Grace Scarborough
Toronto, ON – Willowdale
Zeeland, MI – Haven |
| 25 years, 1988-2013 | Ames, IA – Korean
Calgary, AB – Covenant
Guelph, ON – New Life
Houston, TX – Hope
Kalamazoo, MI – Immanuel
Los Angeles, CA – Community
Mt. Vernon, WA – Faith Community Fellowship
Spokane, WA – Hope
Stephenville, TX |

VII. Reminders

We ask congregations that have observed anniversaries during 2012 or will observe anniversaries during 2013 to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, videos, photographs, and so forth) to the archives.

During 2012, official minutes of 127 Christian Reformed churches (a 30% increase from previous years) and two Christian school organizations were received and microfilmed, and the copies were stored in our vault. Originals were returned to the respective churches. Official minutes were received from all 47 classes. Anniversary materials were received from 28 Christian Reformed churches.

Of the 845 organized congregations that have existed for at least ten years, 667 have sent their minutes to the archives for microfilming. This includes records from two churches that have never had their records duplicated. Due to the persistent and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee continues to urge congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy of their important records; backups will be stored in a secure location and access given only with the permission of the church. The following classes are to be commended for sending the minutes of each of their churches over ten years old to be duplicated and placed in the archives: Arizona, Eastern Canada, Grand Rapids East, Hamilton, Minnkota, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland.

During 2012, the archives staff received twenty-seven requests from local churches for copies of their articles of incorporation and/or bylaws. None of these had sent copies of these items to the archives. Given the frequency of these requests, the committee asks all churches and classes to send duplicates (photocopies, faxes, or email attachments) of such documents to the archives. Mail to Archives, Calvin College, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402; or email crcarchives@calvin.edu; or fax to 616-526-7689.

VIII. Regional representatives

The Historical Committee has a representative in each classis who acts as a liaison between the committee and churches within that classis. During this past year communications have been sent to each of our representatives thanking them for their services throughout 2012 and requesting that they continue to serve next year.

IX. Digitizing of the *Acts of Synod* and the *Agenda for Synod*

Synod 2011 allocated \$4,000 to the Historical Committee to digitize and make available the *Agenda* and *Acts of Synod* for the years 1881-1998. The project has been completed, and the scans can be found via libguides.calvin.edu/crcna_synod. Records for each individual year are word searchable. The *Acts* for years 1857-1880 were done previously and are available at library.calvin.edu/guide/collections/hekman_databases/synod; and those since 1999 are available from the denomination at www.crcna.org/SynodResources.

X. Recommendations

- A. The Historical Committee requests that Dr. Richard H. Harms, archivist, be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot elect two new members to the Historical Committee from the nominees presented to a renewable three-year term.
- C. That synod encourage all churches and classes to send duplicates of their articles of incorporation and/or bylaws to the archives.
- D. That synod encourage the 39 classes whose 170 member churches more than ten years old have not had their minutes duplicated to contact the archives to have this done.

Historical Committee

Lyle Bierma, chair
Richard Harms (ex officio), secretary
Angie Ploegstra
Robert Schoone-Jongen
William Sytsma

I. Brief overview

In 2012, the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and processed twenty-two sermons that are now available on the denominational website. Website staff inform us that we receive a lot of traffic from Google and other search engines. Our main page had 26,000 page views in the past year. We are also told that people not only glance at and leave the page; they stay to actually read as well. With the launch of a new website in January 2013, we are now able to analyze traffic figures of our services in a better way. We thank the denominational Proservices website staff for their work on our behalf.

Our committee is currently seeking ways to better promote our services within the denomination. Our primary target is vacant churches—but others are blessed by our services as well. We hope to place a blog post on the Elders Network that will provide excellent visibility in the Tuesday Network email, the Wednesday *CRC News*, and the Thursday pastor email.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Ken Benjamins (2014), serving as chair and secretary; Rev. Mark Verbruggen (2014); and Rev. Lambert Sikkema (2015). Because Rev. Stephen Tamming was not able to complete his term on the committee, Rev. Rich deLange, who retired from the committee in 2012, offered to stay on to help the committee for an extra year. We thank him for his invaluable assistance! The committee asks synod to appoint Rev. John H. Noordhof to serve on the Sermons for Reading Services Committee.

Rev. John H. Noordhof is the pastor of Williamsburg CRC in Williamsburg, Ontario. He holds an M.Div. degree and graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1992. Rev. Noordhof has served Christian Reformed churches in Dresden, Ontario, and Iron Springs, Alberta. He has been a delegate to synod numerous times.

With the inclusion of ministers on this committee from across the denomination, we are having our annual meeting via Google Hangout, which serves us well. We thank the Lord for the sermons received, posted, and used by CRC churches both within our denomination and worldwide.

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 CRC website.

B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint a new member to a three-year term on the Sermons for Reading Services Committee.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Kenneth F. Benjamins, chair/secretary
Lambert J. Sikkema
Mark Verbruggen

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

The 2012-2013 academic year at Dordt College began with enthusiasm. Dr. Erik Hoekstra, the college's fourth president, was inaugurated in October during a busy Parents Weekend with more than a thousand parents on campus. In his inaugural address, Dr. Hoekstra pledged to build on a tradition of strong biblical leadership and a thoughtfully articulated vision for Christian higher education (www.dordt.edu/publications/faculty_handbook/framework.pdf). He described a community that is invitingly Christian, hospitably Reformed, intellectually stimulating, and occupationally relevant; one that equips Dordt students to be disciples of Christ in every area of their lives.

Over and over again we learn about graduates who are signposts of the kingdom of Christ: engineers, social workers, teachers, lawyers, business people, and more, whose work and lives help show something about the "way things ought to be." We know this takes technical expertise, discernment, and broad preparation for obediently following God's call for how to live in today's world.

This year again we have introduced new programs that will help give our students the kind of holistic foundation they'll need after college.

Two new programs that most directly affect churches' ministries are our new Worship Arts minor and Church Music major, offering contemporary liturgical forms and instrumentation as well as more historic ones. Both emphasize developing discerning leadership skills and strong musical skills as students learn what makes good worship.

Other new programs include

- Construction Management—a multidiscipline, integrated program that prepares students for a profession requiring a wide range of skills and expertise while challenging students to think about how to develop our world responsibly.
- Actuarial Science—a program that goes beyond training students in moral and ethical behaviors to explore what a Reformed worldview might look like when it comes to risk management, modeling chance events, and using data-driven decision-making procedures.
- Christianity and Pop Culture—an interdisciplinary major exploring the connections between the "practices of everyday life" and Christian faith.

Events such as the Evasion of Popular Culture conference held in November help us as a community to think about living consciously Christian lives. This conference aimed to demonstrate that avoiding popular culture and not engaging it thoughtfully gives in to such culture because it is what we "live and breathe." Challenging our students to live intentionally also happens in our voluntary chapel services, which regularly draw large numbers of students.

Another focus of this past year has been planning for and raising funds for a major addition and renovation of our science facilities. Enrollment in our engineering, agriculture, and nursing programs has increased dramatically in the past decade. Science affects every part of our complex and interconnected world, and we want to train Christian leaders in the

sciences who can help shape the way our society develops and lives. We need to update and add labs and classrooms to accommodate the numbers of students enrolled and give them the tools they will need to work in today's world. We hope to begin construction this year.

We are grateful for many blessings again this year—for steady enrollment during times of decline, for ten more years of academic accreditation, for the nearly \$900,000 we have received through Christian Reformed churches. We are humbled once again by God's grace to us and are honored to be able to partner with you as we together promote a vision for Christ-centered Christian higher education. We covet the prayers of your congregations for the work we do each day and each year.

Dordt College
Erik Hoekstra, president

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS or the Institute) is celebrating 45 academic years as a graduate school of Reformed Christian scholarship. We are grateful for the academics that have passed through our doors over these many years, taking and teaching courses from a reformational perspective.

Thank you to the Christian Reformed Church and its members who are investing in this critical ministry. The Institute continues to prepare new generations of Christian scholars for their vocations. Our alumni hold a variety of leadership positions throughout the world. Many readers of this report have had personal experience at ICS, and even more have had teachers or professors who studied here.

We anticipate conferring all three of our degrees at convocation this May: Ph.D. and M.A. in philosophy and Master of Worldview Studies (MWS). Our degrees can be granted with several different emphases, including theology and biblical studies; aesthetics, hermeneutics, and philosophy of discourse; anthropology and ethics; history of philosophy; knowledge, truth, and learning; social and political philosophy; education; social justice; and art, religion, and theology (the last three are MWS).

Our new Research Centre—the Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics—is contributing a Reformed voice to the broader scholarly enterprise, as well as working within the Christian community and engaging in public outreach to the community at large. We have some numbers including student body size and publications at www.icscanada.edu/about/2013facts.

Videos from some of our 2012 conferences are on our website (icscanada.edu). We held a Social Justice and Human Rights Conference with Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff and Dr. Melissa Williams as keynote speakers. One outcome of the conference is a collaborative, jointly funded research project starting with the CRCNA (Canada) on the topic of social justice. The theme of the annual Art Talks! Conference was “Imagination’s Truths: Re-Envisioning Imagination in Philosophy, Religion, and the Arts.” Dr. Richard Kearney (Boston College) gave the keynote. We also cosponsored the Varieties of Continental Thought and Religion Conference, June 14-17, 2012, at Ryerson University; recently held a book launch to celebrate Hendrik Hart and William Sweet’s book *Responses to the Enlightenment*; and will host an Association for Reformed Colleges and Universities lecture by Deborah Bowen in March.

In partnership with The King’s University College, Edmonton, Alberta, we are planning a conference on economic justice in May 2014. It will draw participants from across society—lawyers, farmers, academics, business owners, and advocacy workers.

We are deeply grateful to Mr. Chris Gort for his two years of service as president of ICS. As the current incoming presidents, we have been blessed with a warm welcome and value your prayers for our ministry here at the Institute.

We are thankful for all we have received from our supporters. Because we are a graduate institution without governmental funding and because tuition cannot cover our costs, donations are precious to us. We are working on several fronts to reverse a trend of decreasing individual donations. We are listening to supporters to understand which aspects of our ministry are most valued. While we now have faculty and students from the CRC

as well as from a variety of denominations, all of our faculty are committed to a Reformed Christian perspective. We were birthed out of the Christian Reformed community, and we are grateful for the support you have given the Institute over the years as we look forward to the coming years in his service.

Institute for Christian Studies
Dawn M. Wolthuis, president
Thomas R. Wolthuis, president

Greetings from The King's University College! We're pleased to have this opportunity to share the blessings we have enjoyed and the challenges we have experienced since our last report, and to look ahead to the exciting opportunities of 2013.

Last year we announced that King's ranked at the top of the list in four out of five categories in *MacLean's* university rankings. This year we did one better. According to the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium's annual report on student satisfaction published in *Maclean's 2013 University Rankings*, King's topped the national rankings in all five categories:

- Satisfaction with the overall quality of the education received at this university.
- Most of my professors encourage students to participate in class discussions.
- Satisfaction with concern shown by the university for you as an individual.
- Most of my professors are reasonably accessible outside of class to help students.
- Satisfaction with opportunities to enhance education through activities beyond the classroom.

Dr. Melanie Humphreys has been named the new president of The King's University College, effective July 1, 2013, when current President Harry Fernhout retires after eight years of faithful service. She is currently dean of student care and services at Wheaton College near Chicago, where she has served since 2009. Dr. Humphreys also spent ten years as vice president of student life and dean of students at LCC International University in Lithuania, an internationally recognized Christian liberal arts institution that has distinguished itself by offering a unique, future-oriented style of education. The new president has a Ph.D. in higher education from Azusa Pacific University in California, a master's degree in administrative leadership, and an undergraduate degree in English and psychology from Trinity Western University. Dr. Humphreys was born in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and grew up in the Vancouver area. For the full story and an introductory video of Dr. Humphreys, go to www.kingsu.ca.

We are extremely grateful for the leadership that Dr. Harry Fernhout has provided during his eight years at King's. We will be hosting several farewell events this spring to celebrate his contributions to this institution. Dr. Fernhout's official retirement event will be held in Edmonton on Friday, May 10, 2013.

In the past few years King's has given serious attention to environmental sustainability on campus. In 2011, King's participated for the first time in the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) conducted by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (of which King's is a member), and we earned a bronze rating. The STARS reporting process was completed again in fall 2012, and we are pleased to report that King's improved its rating to silver. The silver rating follows as a result of our commitment as an institution to foster wise and

sustainable development of our physical, financial, and technological resources through effective and forward-looking management.

This fall, King's enrolled 668 students to study and be a part of our community. While overall enrollment was below expectations, growth in the size of the first-year class holds hope for the future. A task force is also diligently working on efforts to increase the retention rate between the first and second years. We are encouraged by significant growth in our elementary and secondary education programs, a record number of music students, and a 10.5 percent increase in first-year students. We pray that prospective students and their parents will continue to see the extraordinary Christian post-secondary education offered at King's.

King's continued success in providing students with a transformational, Christian university education relies, in part, on the generous, faithful support of the community that created this university thirty-four years ago. Our partnership with the CRC community has played a significant role in the life of King's. We have been blessed by these relationships, and we trust that your communities have also been blessed by the work God is doing through King's. We thank God for the ongoing support of Christian higher education at King's. May God bless your work on behalf of his church during Synod 2013.

The King's University College Board of Trustees
Bill Diepeveen, chair

Kuyper College is very pleased to be recognized as a partner with the Christian Reformed Church as we serve Christ's church and his world together. As we approach the school year in which we will celebrate our 75th anniversary (2013-2014), we recognize the decades during which the CRC has walked alongside and has been integrally involved with our institution and mission. Through those years we have seen the college grow in programs and enrollment, leading to greater impact around the world. Our curriculum and students continue to focus on ministry and service vocations, using the twenty-one majors from our on-campus and collaborative programs as entrées into these opportunities and settings.

We are happy to report that we have sustained well our reaccreditation review with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. The visiting team was very complimentary of our Self-Study Report, the quality of our programs, and the engagement of our students. We were challenged regarding our financial ratios (a.k.a. "cash on hand") and are expected to work on remedying that. Two other areas in which the team called for improvement are our board development and a refreshed enrollment strategy for growing the college. In the end, they found us to be in 100 percent compliance with HLC standards and recommend us for continuing accreditation. These concluding statements of the visiting team summarize well their affirmation of Kuyper College:

The visiting team is confident that, based on its thorough review of the institution, Kuyper College continues to meet the five evaluative criteria for HLC accreditation. They have a clearly stated and widely embraced mission and are exemplary in their commitment to function with the highest standards of integrity. Kuyper College is most cognizant of the issues confronting her future. Resources, while limited, are carefully stewarded to enable the mission to be realized. The team also sees promise for the college as they begin to think and plan strategically.

Kuyper is blessed with good students who are missionally driven. Their learning is assessed, and faculty take seriously what they learn through this process to inform teaching practice. The college embodies the "life of the mind" and continued learning as it informs practice. Both are inherent in the college mission. The team also reviewed evidence that Kuyper College is consistently working to identify her new and emerging constituencies in order to serve them in mutually advantageous ways.

The college is at a point now where we are hiring two additional faculty to fill a position in the Bible and Theology Department and a position needed for our Business Leadership major. The high availability of well-qualified adjuncts in western Michigan has helped us greatly up to this point, and we now anticipate the benefit of having dedicated professors come in to help develop these programs further.

A stellar development is an agreement we signed with Davenport University this year to accept their students into our Social Work major. What is exceptional about this is that the Bible and Theology course components required in this major are being maintained with the Davenport students.

Hosting them here at Kuyper College will introduce a new dynamic in the classroom with which our faculty and students are eager to engage.

Again, we express our gratitude for the prayer and financial support the CRC has shown us over the years. Your spirit of partnership in our mission is a true help and encouragement to us as we strive to serve the CRC well—along with others—through the graduates we can provide to serve in the various ministries of the church. God bless you as you continue to work for the honor of his name.

Kuyper College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Greetings from Redeemer University College to the delegates to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. We trust that God will bless and guide you in your deliberations and that your work will be a blessing to Christ's body and coming kingdom.

This year (2012-13) Redeemer University College has been celebrating its 30th anniversary. In 1982 Redeemer opened its doors to 97 students. By contrast, in fall 2012 we welcomed 909 FTE students and a total of 959 full- and part-time students—nearly 10 times our number in 1982! Since the first commencement in 1986, Redeemer has graduated more than 3,000 students. Approximately 34 percent of all graduates have continued their education in professional and academic programs in more than 70 graduate schools across Canada, the United States, and around the world.

Throughout our thirty years, God has carried Redeemer through both good and hard times and has provided not only students but also faithful faculty, staff, and supporters. We give thanks to God for his guidance and provision during these years. Redeemer remains strongly committed to its mission of providing Christian university education across the liberal arts and sciences from a biblical, Christ-centered worldview, and we look forward to discovering how God will lead and use Redeemer in the next thirty years.

The 2012-13 academic year also marks a time of considerable change at Redeemer. This change includes three additional new faculty members, nine staff members who are new or in new positions, and newly appointed leaders for the positions of provost and vice president, academic; vice president, administration and finance; and vice president, advancement. These executive appointments complete a change in the entire leadership team during the past three years due to retirements.

Redeemer also is expanding both our curricular programs and our cocurricular student life programming. Our goal is to provide excellent, Christian holistic university education that leads students into whole-life discipleship and service. This year we launched our bachelor of science (honors) in health sciences, and for 2013-14 we are planning courses in international development and opportunities for international internships as part of our developing international studies program. Our community development initiative received additional funding, enabling us to retain a staff person to facilitate the extensive effort of our students in service-learning and volunteer work with mission and social service agencies in downtown Hamilton. In addition, our new director of co-op and career services has further enabled us to provide co-op and internship opportunities and career counseling to help students find their callings in God's world. Finally, our mental health initiative, funded by a grant, is enabling us to address growing mental health concerns among students and to pursue research and resources regarding best practices to meet these concerns, including mental health first-aid training for student residence life leaders.

Redeemer also continues to offer to our wider community a rich variety of special lectures, events, and performances on campus. Our fifth annual Worship Conference, featuring Brian Doerkson, brought a record number of participants to Redeemer's campus. We have been blessed by a number of

speakers and events, including the Zylstra Symposium, on the topic of “The Word of God in the City of Man,” with David Peck, Paul Brink, and many others; our “The World and Our Calling” lectures with our own Dr. Deborah Bowen as the ARCU (Association of Reformed Colleges and Universities) guest lecturer; and also student presentations. Mark Buchanan, pastor and award-winning author of seven books, including *Your Church Is Too Safe* and *Spiritual Rhythm*, will be our guest speaker at the 26th annual Ministers’ Conference.

We are very grateful for the prayers 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 university education and scholarship from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective and for the mission we share with you of building up Christ’s body and equipping it for serving his kingdom.

Redeemer University College
Hubert R. Krygsman, president

Trinity Christian College continues to value its partnership with the Christian Reformed Church, both in terms of the students we educate and the churches we serve.

Many students come to Trinity from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin, but we also attract students from around the nation and world. For example, this past fall we were blessed with our greatest-ever number of students from Rehoboth Christian School, and we welcomed our largest-ever group of new students from Reformed congregations in South Korea.

While more than one-third of our students come from Reformed congregations, all students receive an education at Trinity that is founded on Reformed theology and framed by a Reformed perspective in all disciplines. Located in the metropolitan Chicago area and requiring field experience of students in every major, Trinity seeks to lead competent young people into leadership in God's world, whether in business or biology, computer science or communication arts, physical education or political science—to name just a few of seventy programs of study. In addition, our new master's degree programs in counseling psychology and special education each have a successful first semester behind them, further enhancing the preparation of Christian leaders.

The Church Connection Initiative at Trinity (CCIT) offers resources to church leaders and members through events held on Trinity's campus. Trinity hosted the eighth annual gathering of the three Chicago-area CRC classes in September with guest speaker Dr. Robert Mulholland, author of *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* and *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self*.

The CCIT also welcomed the denomination's Salaam Project, hosting a November conference designed to help Christians understand how to better love their Muslim neighbors. Trinity students who participated in joint service activities with local Muslim students helped lead a workshop.

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America met on Trinity's campus in summer 2012, giving witness to Trinity's desire to assist Reformed efforts across denominations.

Upcoming events include a seminar at which Calvin Theological Seminary's Dr. David Rylaarsdam will address the topic of children and the Lord's Supper. In addition, Trinity will host a Care and Kindness Conference with Dr. James Kok, and a Creative Reading for Imaginative Preaching seminar for pastors led by Dr. Neal Plantinga.

We are thankful for the financial support we receive from churches that take advantage of the policy allowing a portion of ministry shares for Christian higher education to be directed to their area college. During 2012, we gratefully accepted \$185,615 in funds from CRC churches and classes.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

It seems that the Calvinist Cadet Corps program grows every year through the addition of new merit badges for boys to earn. A new one this year is a badge on church leadership that teaches boys about various areas to serve in the church, and what each involves. Badge work includes learning about the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon and about teachers and leaders of groups such as Sunday school and Cadets. When looking to grow church leaders from within, it is good to start young. Another new badge will be fun to work on: Amusement Park Science takes a boy to a theme park to learn the physics behind the various rides. This year, we have also decided to post information about our merit badges online, making it convenient for anyone with Internet access to look up a badge at any time.

While clubs and councils often hold their own events and camps, the main international event last year was the counselors' convention in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Cadet conventions are a family affair, gathering counselors, wives, and children from all over North America. The convention this past year was well received, and it introduced the theme "God's Power Through Me." The fellowship and inspiration at the convention were at least as important as the training that took place.

Our training took on a new look this year. We have always put our trainers, known as Developers of Counselor Education, or DCEs, through three weekends of training over a period of three years. In that time, they are taught to assess the learning needs in their councils, design and develop workshops to meet those needs, and present the workshops. This year we added a fourth phase: active DCEs who have completed the first three phases of the program can come back for additional training. We are teaching the men to become coaches. This skill will work best for counselors who are good at working one-on-one with people. Instead of addressing groups of men, they will sit down with one other man and guide him in making decisions. We have completed the training for the first group of men and are eager to learn the benefits of this new program.

Finally, we have a new opportunity to grow the Cadet ministry in Africa. Mwaya Kitave, a Christian Reformed World Missions representative in Kenya, would like us to bring the Cadet ministry to the people he works with in eastern and southern Africa. When he approached us, he was unaware that we already have a presence in Kenya with the Reformed Church of East Africa. We anticipate that this new development can work well for us and for the communities in eastern and southern Africa, and we look forward to seeing how God will lead in that direction.

Calvinist Cadet Corps
G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

For fifty-five years GEMS Girls' Clubs has emphasized Micah 6:8 as a life-defining verse, seeking to equip women and girls to live radically faithful lives—"doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God."

Highlights from 2012 include

- doubling our efforts to shape and influence the lives of early teen girls by offering an intense summer camp experience called Get Connected! Camp. Hundreds of lives have been forever changed through the work of the Spirit at this camp.
- inviting preteen girls and their moms to participate in the first of many We Walk events to be held in locations across the continent. This event is designed to help girls passionately pursue activism and a life of service.
- continuing to expand our network of clubs in the United States and Canada and around the world through the ministries of GEMS Girls' Clubs and GEMS Girls' Clubs International. To date, 936 clubs are currently ministering to the needs of girls.
- laying the groundwork and framework for reaching girls in urban settings.
- continuing to invest in training and equipping women in their mentoring roles as counselors. Approximately 3,500 of our 5,400 counselors in North America participated in one or more training events.
- placing greater emphasis on prayer at all levels of GEMS has continued to be a major focus and emphasis.
- building, equipping, staffing, opening, and operating The Esther School in Chongwe, Zambia, for orphaned and under-resourced children. Twenty-five preschool and twenty-five kindergarten children are now receiving an outstanding, Christian education at the school. The building and operation of the school have been made possible through the work of God in and through GEMS.

Goals and new initiatives for 2013:

- To inspire women to be passionate in their calling to mentor girls.
- To inspire girls and women to greater acts of service and activism.
- To expand awareness of all aspects of the GEMS ministry, internally and externally.
- To help clubs become totally inclusive communities.
- To continue creating strategic partnerships with urban churches and nonprofit organizations for the purpose of taking the GEMS ministry into urban settings.
- To continue building and operating The Esther School, a Christian day school in Chongwe, Zambia, built by GEMS Girls' Clubs.
- To expand the arms of GEMS to serve more girls and more clubs in North America and internationally as well.

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, retiring executive director

Kathryn Miller, incoming executive director

Youth Unlimited

We want to tell you a story about a young man who gave an incredible gift. At a Youth Unlimited experience this summer, Nick's group leader brought students out to meet people living on the streets. On the way back to the church that afternoon, the leader saw Nick limping. Pausing to check if Nick had been hurt, the leader realized that Nick was barefoot. He had given away his shoes to a man living on the street. No pressure. No big announcements. Nick saw a need and met it.

Many students who participate in Youth Unlimited experiences are immature or indifferent spiritually. Such students are likely to turn their backs on the church soon after graduation. But given time and space to encounter Jesus Christ and see a broken world in need of help, hearts change. These same students return home more spiritually mature and aware of the injustices around them. Students go from being spectators of the church to leaders in the church, just like Nick!

Youth Unlimited was honored to partner with the Christian Reformed Church in 2012. Through 28 faith-forming experiences, more than 2,000 students and leaders from 190 Christian Reformed churches gave 49,250 hours of service in the name of Jesus. The students encountered Jesus Christ and were empowered to shine his light throughout this world.

We are filled with anticipation for what God will do through us in 2013!

Youth Unlimited
Jeff Kruithof, executive director

Friendship Ministries is an international/interdenominational ministry committed to sharing God's love with people who have an intellectual disability and enabling them to be active members of God's family.

Friendship Ministries provides opportunities for people with an intellectual disability to be baptized and make profession of faith using our resource *Expressing Faith in Jesus*. Other Friendship members have found ways to serve and share with their congregations by ushering, helping to lead worship, and participating in service projects.

There are more than 300 Friendship programs in Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States, and many of these programs involve multiple CRC congregations. Many programs also collaborate with churches of other denominations, extending their outreach into the wider community.

We are a worldwide organization:

- Currently there are more than 1,200 Friendship programs in 28 countries.
- Friendship groups are in more than 75 denominations.
- Friendship serves approximately 18,000 people who have an intellectual disability.
- Through *Ministerio Amistad*, the Spanish arm of Friendship Ministries, there are four programs in the Cuba CRC. There are almost 300 programs in Latin America.
- This past year 40 new programs were started. Our goal is to keep up this pace for the next year.

We collaborate with the CRC:

- Our executive director has served on the Disability Concerns Advisory Committee for more than 15 years.
- Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) students in the pastoral care class are required to attend a Friendship group and write a one-page reflection paper. The Friendship executive director meets with the classes to help process the experience.
- CTS students may participate in Friendship groups as a service learning option.

We offer high-quality curriculum materials to help groups grow in faith:

- The Friendship Bible Studies used in our programs have three themes with 95 sessions: *God, Our Father; Jesus, Our Savior; The Spirit, Our Helper*.
- *Living God's Way* has 13 sessions on the Ten Commandments.
- *Psalms: God Cares How I Feel* has 10 sessions.
- We offer *God, Our Father; Jesus, Our Savior*; and *Compartiendo la Palabra de Dios con Personas con Discapacidad* in Spanish (the last being a translation and combination of our Program Guide and *What Friendship Mentors Need to Know*).
- Our book *Autism and Your Church* is a resource for congregations that need help including people with autism spectrum disorders. This year, it was also translated into Spanish under the title *El autismo y tu iglesia*.

Friendship Ministries partners with Faith Alive Christian Resources in developing the materials used in Friendship programs. Together with Faith Alive we have also developed webinars that offer training on various aspects of disability ministry. This spring we will collaborate with Disability Concerns on a new webinar titled "Beyond the Ramp: Questions and Answers on Disability Ministry."

Additional services we provide:

- consultation on including children in church education programs
- consultation with parents on how to approach the congregation for inclusion of their sons and daughters who have an intellectual disability
- ideas for recruiting volunteers for programs
- consultation on making worship a more multisensory experience, which is often helpful for people who have disabilities
- consultation on how to include people who have an intellectual disability in worship and the life of the church
- recommending resources as needed on various topics for ministering with people who have disabilities

Mentors who volunteer in the programs often tell us how their spiritual lives are enhanced through their ministry with people who have an intellectual disability. Families express that Friendship programs are the one place their son or daughter is fully accepted and spiritually nurtured. This witness has encouraged many families either to remain in their congregations or to join a church that has a Friendship program. Friendship has also been a source of outreach to many care providers who are included in these programs when they bring friends to a church that has a program.

Friendship Ministries

Nella Uitvlugt, executive director

Note: At the time of publication of the *Agenda for Synod*, Mrs. Uitvlugt was taken home to live with her Lord. The board of Friendship Ministries expresses their deep appreciation for the contributions that she made during her lifetime of service and extends its sincere sympathy to the Uitvlugt family, the staff of Friendship Ministries, and the friends and mentors who hold her dear.

Barry Chance, president

Friendship Ministries board

This year Partners Worldwide has seen one of our best years ever. As we reflect on the ways God has used Partners Worldwide to equip thousands of business people and entrepreneurs around the world, and the way he has molded and shaped our organization since our birth out of World Renew, we are both humbled and encouraged. To God be the glory!

More than ever before, Christian business people are being affirmed, encouraged, and commissioned as Christ's agents in their spheres of influence—their employees, customers, vendors, and suppliers. And we are seeing the impact of our partnership model around the world. Over 17,000 businesspeople in 23 countries are using their “business as their ministry”—making an impact on the marketplace, creating jobs, and transforming lives.

We are constantly amazed by the entrepreneurial and resourceful nature of the business people in our network. Often under very difficult business climates, they use their business in Christ's transformation of lives and his restoration of all things: mentoring at-risk youth, starting schools and medical clinics, providing more nutritious and affordable food for their communities, encouraging earth-friendly alternatives to land use, starting community and economic development organizations, and employing people who otherwise could not find a job.

The 2012 results show that businesses created and sustained 33,604 jobs, making a direct impact on the lives of 170,000 people. A job changes everything for these families. No longer dependent on aid or handouts, they have a sustainable income to lift themselves out of poverty, providing food, a secure home, education, and medicine for their children and other family members. These imagebearers of Christ are able to live out their calling to business!

Thank you to the Christian Reformed Church in North America for partnering in this vital ministry of Partners Worldwide. This movement of people serving through business is gaining tremendous momentum as more people recognize the untapped potential that exists for kingdom transformation through business. The demand for the work of Partners Worldwide continues to increase, and we have many opportunities to engage in this work—both in North America and around the world.

We look forward to partnering with more CRC churches and CRC businesspeople to continue creating jobs and transforming lives around the globe to fulfill a unique calling to “business as ministry for a world without poverty.”

Partners Worldwide
Douglas Seebeck, president

“The things you have heard me teach before many witnesses, commit to faithful people, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

The mission of Timothy Leadership Training Institute (TLTI) is to train pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders worldwide for the purpose of building viable and healthy congregations and communities.

TLTI was created in 1997 by retired Calvin Theological Seminary professors and active missionaries whose vision was to train pastors who were without opportunities for formal religious education. The huge growth of the church in the developing world and its need for leaders led to writing seven training manuals that cover the basic areas of ministry that we, in North America, often take for granted.

The training manuals incorporate inductive-style teaching that focuses on reading Scripture, asking questions, and discussing topics with peers. Anyone who has gone through the training is equipped to facilitate a group. The desire is for trainees to go back to their home congregations to train their church leaders and lay pastors. TLTI trains trainers with the intent that the program will eventually be self-sustaining through the passion of indigenous leaders. The local church, led by faithful, obedient, and knowledgeable leaders, honors God in its work.

Designed as an interdenominational training institute, the program was first piloted in Africa and was then known as Project Africa. Currently TLTI has expanded into 57 countries, including Laos, Mongolia, and South Sudan this past year. In 2012, over 16,000 participants representing 520 denominations used manuals translated into 27 languages.

In North America, the TLTI material is being used in leadership development networks and as elder and deacon training. It is also being used to strengthen the leadership of immigrant churches in our communities and as a tool to encourage North American churches to be more missional in their own communities.

Since spring 2012, TLTI has experienced exciting growth. From 2011 to 2012 the Timothy team training events around the world expanded from 84 to 102, denominations represented grew from 336 to 520, the number of congregations participating grew from 1,184 to 2,274, and the trainee count grew from 10,000 to over 16,000. This is only possible through the hard work of our staff, our master trainers, the dedication of volunteers, the support of donors, and the grace of God. We also share the strength of partner CRC agencies: World Renew, Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and Calvin Theological Seminary, as well as partnerships with Words of Hope and Mission India.

We are grateful to God for this outreach of the Christian Reformed Church, and we look forward to partnering with more CRC churches to bring glory to our God through this ministry.

Timothy Leadership Training Institute
Charles Powell, president

STUDY COMMITTEES

I. Introduction

Over the years, various synods of the Christian Reformed Church have debated the role of deacons in the ministry of the church and have questioned whether the structures of the church are adequate to enable a flourishing diaconate. In particular, the question has frequently been raised whether deacons ought to participate in the major assemblies of the church. This question was raised most recently by Classis Grandville when they sent an overture to Synod 2010, requesting synod to establish a task force to propose changes to relevant Church Order articles which would allow for an expanded role for deacons and a revitalized, more robust diaconate that is better able to meet the challenges of our hurting world.

Synod recognized the urgency of that request and appointed a task force with the following mandate:

That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a task force to review the articles of the Church Order relating to the office of deacon at the church and major assemblies, as well as recommend resources that encourage revitalization of the diaconate and its role in the community. The intent of the review would be to encourage, empower, and educate churches and broader assemblies to structure their diaconal ministry in ways that

- allow for effective coordination of ministry efforts that transform the community and the church, as members minister in and with their community. This harnesses “God gifts” in the community for community benefit. The gifts of churches and their members, as well as the gifts lying dormant in the community, need to be stewardly. Church resources can be leveraged in amazing ways if they harness latent community gifts. Helping neighbors steward their resources is another pathway to heart change, significant living, opening conversations, and relationships that draw people to Jesus as Savior, Redeemer, and King.
- select leadership based on gifts commensurate with the office and vision for ministry.
- lead church members to exercise their gifts and so enhance their own faith walk as they minister with community, nation, and world.
- establish terms of deacon tenure that provide for consistent ministry oversight, implementation, and coordination.
- address the place and role of deacons at the broader assemblies.

Grounds:

- a. The current structure and tradition do not address the ministry context or the expectations of the equality of office established in Church Order Article 2.
- b. The mandate in the charge to deacons is difficult to fulfill given the current language in the Church Order.
- c. Past efforts to address this (i.e., asking for stronger classical diaconal committees) have not resulted in churches being the agents of transformation in their communities.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 829)

It is important to recognize what the task force was *not* mandated to do, and that is to offer biblical, theological, and historical reasons for permitting the seating of deacons at major assemblies. Those arguments have been made frequently and persuasively in the past, but we were not asked to rehearse those arguments again, even though we learned a great deal from them and include a historical synopsis in our report. Synod 2010 assumed the legitimacy of the argument to permit deacons at major assemblies and

instructed the task force to review the relevant Church Order articles and propose such changes to enable greater participation.

The task force met several times throughout 2011 and 2012 to pursue its mandate. At our first meeting, we adopted the name *Diakonia Remixed*. *Diakonia* is Greek for *service* and a *remix* is a fresh reformulation of an original version. The name therefore reflects the task force's strong desire to see a reinvigorated diaconal ministry in the CRC.

In pursuit of that end the task force took up the following tasks:

- examined the Bible's teaching about *diakonia*.
- learned about the Church Order and its commentaries.
- articulated a set of guiding principles that could shape our proposals and guide synod's deliberations.
- reviewed the history of CRC study committees and synodical decisions about the role of deacons at major assemblies.
- gauged the mind of the church by conducting a comprehensive on-line survey, using the services of the Calvin College Center for Social Research.
- began to gather resources that can enrich the church's diaconal ministry at multiple levels and in a variety of contexts.
- reviewed various related materials such as liturgical forms and leadership guides.

To assist us in our task, the task force invited a number of people from across the denomination to serve as advisers to the task force. They reviewed draft documents, promoted the survey, participated in focus group activities, and offered helpful feedback as we proceeded. The task force also created a public website (www.crcna.org/diakonia) to report progress on its work and an internal website that functioned as a discussion forum and bulletin board for a variety of resources.

The outcome of our work is this report. It consists of background materials (with links to additional online resources for further study), a set of guiding principles, a cluster of recommendations to revise articles of the Church Order to reflect the guiding principles and to allow the participation of deacons at the church's major assemblies, proposals for redrafting relevant liturgical and church educational materials, and suggestions for ways to resource a "Re-imagined Diaconate."

The central theological and ecclesiastical conviction that has guided our work is that the church does not simply *have* deacons but is by its very nature and calling a diaconate—that is, a community created by the triune God to be a servant people in the world. Rather than starting with the story of the early church in Acts 6, which is commonly (but erroneously) thought of as definitive for the inauguration of the diaconate, the task force began with Ephesians 4:11-13, where the apostle Paul writes,

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service [*diakonia*], so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright translates verse 12a this way: “Their job is to give God’s people the equipment they need for their work of service” (in *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*, p. 46).

Ephesians teaches a larger lesson than can be found in Acts 6, namely that *diakonia*, as the work of service that restores *shalom*, is not confined to a particular office but belongs to the church as a whole. The calling of deacons is not to perform that service on behalf of the church, but rather to equip, empower, and enable the whole church to live out its own diaconal calling. This important principle echoes the findings of many other study committees, all of whom have come to similar conclusions.

The substantive core of our report is the cluster of recommendations to revise the Church Order to express a greater sense of the parity of the offices and to allow for diaconal representation at the major assemblies. We propose several other revisions as well, many of which are for the sake of clarity and consistency with the guiding principles we articulate below.

II. Research conducted

A. *The survey*

The 2010 overture from Classis Grandville stated that “most churches, in the context of ministry needs today, struggle with using the office of deacon as effectively as they would hope. Part of the struggle is one of selection. The majority of deacons at any given point in time are in their first term in office. Despite the 1973 report ‘The Nature of Ecclesiastical Office’ that established the equality of all offices, deacons are often still perceived as ‘elders in training’” (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 690). The overture also claims that “the local diaconate does not have the structure and support needed to carry out the charge it has been given” (p. 691). Further, the overture recognizes the rich potential of the diaconate to be an agent of community transformation but laments that the potential remains largely unfulfilled.

The task force wished to check the assumptions made in the overture and recruited the services of the Center for Social Research at Calvin College to conduct a survey that would paint a portrait of the current state of diaconal affairs in the CRC. We asked questions about church members’ perceptions of deacons and about their relative satisfaction with the work deacons performed in the church, in the community, and globally. We asked church members to reflect on the relative effectiveness of deacons in terms of ministries of mercy and benevolence, those of community transformation, and those of advocacy and justice ministries. We inquired about the adequacy of training for deacons, about their role as leaders and equippers of others to engage in ministries to the community.

The data that was returned is rich and complex. The report on the survey results, available online, is worth reading in its entirety but is too lengthy to be included here. The following brief summary will have to suffice: in general the task force discovered that the assumptions of Classis Grandville are largely true, and this was affirmed repeatedly by our advisers. The simpler tasks of mercy and benevolence—setting offering schedules, meeting benevolence needs within the congregation, receiving offerings for local and national needs—were perceived by many as the task that deacons did most frequently and at which they were most competent. As the tasks became

more complex and challenging, moving from benevolence to community engagement through to justice advocacy, the frequency of diaconal involvement and the perceptions of deacons' competence to perform those tasks, or to lead others in performing them, decreased radically. So, for example, while the vast majority of deacons do very well at setting the offering schedule, hardly any were actively pursuing better housing policies in their communities or seeking restorative justice.

Many survey respondents also believed that the work of deacons, their leadership potential, and the overall ministries of the church would be enhanced by representation of deacons at classis meetings and synod.

To access a complete summary of survey results, please visit www.crcna.org/pages/diakonia_survey.cfm.

B. Diaconal committees

Another part of our research included a review of diaconal committees because diaconal committees are mandated by the Church Order as a helpful way for churches to engage in ministries of mercy that are beyond the scope of individual congregations. Article 75-b states:

The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their ministry of mercy. The classes themselves may perform this ministry when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer this task, each classis shall have a classical diaconal committee.

How effective are classical diaconal committees (CDCs)? How many are there, and how active are they? What are the challenges they face, and could those challenges be met by other structural innovations in the church? The following is a summary of what the task force learned about CDCs. It should be noted that our study of diaconal committees was not exhaustive, thus the following may not completely represent the status of diaconal committees in the CRCNA.

1. Canadian CDCs

- a. **Diaconal Ministries Canada** supports and encourages twelve classes (six of which have active diaconal conferences and six of which do not). It is involved in and encourages community and justice ministries as well as deacon resources and training.
- b. **CDC, Classis Toronto** began to lose purpose a few years ago. It asked classis to form a classis committee in order to give a structure within which to work together as deacons. This was formed in 2009 but has not gone particularly well. The committee has done very little. There is talk of recommending that this committee be disbanded.
- c. **CDC, Classis Huron**—During the 1980s the conference was primarily involved in diaconal training and project stimulation among the churches in classis. They were a self-governing body, funded through dues from diaconates. In the early 1990s, the role of the conference/committee shifted to a training role for deacons, under the governance of classis. Currently the deacons get together once or twice a year so that they can hear each other's stories. They have no formal board.
- d. **Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference** has a part-time coordinator and is very active.

2. Current U.S. CDCs

- a. **Christian Service Ministries** (Chicago South) had a Diaconal Task Force for quite a few years. After a while, it seemed that it was losing momentum, and it dissolved. Several deacons in the area felt it was necessary to still have an organization focused on the needs of lay leaders in the church. So in February 2002, Christian Service Ministries was formed. It is funded by Classis Chicago South and has a part-time coordinator. They focus on training for pastors, elders, deacons, and lay leaders; providing resources; and networking opportunities.
- b. **Diaconal Ministries** (Muskegon, Mich.) was established in the 1980s and currently has a full-time ministry coordinator who oversees service committees in three areas of the classis which are involved in direct service ministries. Classis pays the coordinator's salary, and the ministries are funded by the churches and some grants.
- c. **Holland Deacons' Conference** (Holland, Mich.) has functioned for over forty years. It has a very strong board and executive team and paid, full-time staff. It oversees many community ministries, including My Brother's and My Sister's House (residential housing for adults with intellectual disabilities). It is very independent of classis yet cooperates with classis. Holland Deacons' Conference is primarily funded by churches, individuals, businesses, and foundations. Classis Holland also has a part-time ministries coordinator.
- d. **Kalamazoo Deacons' Conference** (Kalamazoo, Mich.) is nearly forty years old and was more closely tied to the classis as a diaconal committee but now is serving more independently as a diaconal arm of many evangelical churches to the inner city of Kalamazoo. It has become more of a nonprofit organization, even though their name does not suggest this. It has full-time, paid staff and does both relief and individual development.
- e. **Siouxland Deacons Conference** (Northwest Iowa) is a joint ministry between Classis Iakota and Classis Heartland. Initially they focused on projects and education and are now moving toward community development. Their staff has been full time since the outset. Mr. Rick Droog, the current coordinator, says they are seen as the visionaries/planners who are willing to work with individual churches to help them do ministry. They are very much connected to the classes and receive approximately half of their funding from them. They do both relief and individual development.

3. Current U.S. nonprofits

- a. **Starfish Ministries** (Lake Superior; Eastern Minnesota) began as a nonprofit organization from the outset. The dream of those who organized it was to do ministry in the Twin Cities area that focused on reaching people in poverty. Its staff has always been full time. It is supported by classis at about 20 to 25 percent of its budget since it began in 1995, even though its ministry is connected to less than one-third of the churches in classis. There are other classis-supported ministries in

other areas of the classis, so most are benefitting from classis support. Starfish Ministries does individual development and is moving toward more community development.

- b. **Volunteers in Action** (Rocky Mountain) has moved more toward being a nonprofit organization but continues to function as a CDC for Classis Rocky Mountain. It does relief as well as individual improvement programs and has always had full-time, paid staff.
 - c. **Volunteers in Service (VIS)** (Thornapple Valley, Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, and Grandville) started in 1986 as a ministry of the five classes and their CDCs. The board was made up of a delegate from each conference along with CRC at-large members. After the folding of each of the CDCs by the late 1990s, VIS became its own nonprofit organization and still sought board members from churches in each of the five classes and other denominations. Each classis continued financial support, but VIS began seeking more diverse funding streams. It has full-time paid staff. They do individual development and diaconate development/training work. *Note:* Classis Grand Rapids East has a part-time ministry coordinator (as of September 2009) and Classis Grand Rapids South has had a part-time diaconal coordinator for the past ten years, but in 2011 VIS was contracted by Classis Grand Rapids South to do diaconal development with its nineteen churches.
 - d. **Northeast Community Transformation (NECT)** (Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson) incorporated in 2007 and serves as a holistic ministry team of classical ministries. Prior to NECT's incorporation, Classes Hudson and Hackensack supported a regional diaconal team for decades. Over the years, the team had many names (including the Mid-Atlantic Diaconal Conference, Mid-Atlantic Social Justice Committee, and Mid-Atlantic Mercy Ministries, to name a few). The primary ministry of the team was coordination of a Men's Shelter Ministry, which NECT continues today.
 - e. **Imagine NW!** coaches, consults, supports, networks, trains, advocates, and prays for a growing array of partnership groups throughout Oregon, Washington, and Alaska, training communities to use the Asset-Based Community Development model.
4. Discontinued U.S. CDCs
- a. **Pella Diaconal Conference** (Central Plains) was joined with the Home Missions committee of that classis in an attempt to combine word and deed. It did not work the way organizers had hoped. This classis has a wide geographic footprint and it became a ministry only in the Pella area, which made it difficult for other churches to support. It has been inactive for ten years or more. Rev. Jack Gray, who served as the stated clerk for Classis Pella, said they waited for the churches to *want* a diaconal conference before they began a new one, but the grassroots support never materialized.

- b. **Western Diaconal Conference** (Lake Superior; Western Minnesota) was focused on projects. Its last focus was a Friendship ministry in Willmar, Minn. Its staff was always part-time. It lasted about five years and was funded by classis and the local churches.
- c. **Tri-city Ministries Committee** (Muskegon) was functioning in the 1990s with a paid staff, serving the three communities within Classis Muskegon. We are uncertain of its status now.

5. Conclusions

In Canada, Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) provides leadership and resources for deacons in all classes in Canada, whether they have a CDC or not. They encourage classes and individual churches to get involved in diaconal work and provide resources and training.

In the United States, some CDCs have remained *committees* that assist the churches in their classes in the area of mercy ministries. In other cases, they have become separate nonprofit organizations (NPOs) with their own missions. Some of these NPOs have stayed connected to the classes, and others have become disconnected. Some classes have never had a CDC.

Some of the reasons given for why CDCs have struggled, in no particular order of importance, include the following:

- a. Lack of support and encouragement (financial and reporting) by classis and/or churches of classis.
- b. Competing existence of an NPO or DMC.
- c. Geography—congregations want to focus on their local setting and sense no mandate to consider a larger ministry.
- d. Varying capacities of lay leadership.
- e. No paid or only part-time staff.
- f. No clear, meaningful, and unified vision, mission, and purpose.
- g. Deacons not active at classis level of ministry planning and performance.

C. *References to the heart of diakonia in the CRC creeds, confessions, testimonies, and ecumenical faith declaration*

The task force thought it would be helpful to look beyond the Church Order to see how the church's diaconal role is described in our creeds and confessions. From the vantage point of a lay person, it seems that the oldest documents were primarily concerned with doctrinal and theological foundations that established the Reformed churches and distinguished them from others. They were less interested in guiding the church's missiology as a whole, and even less so the church's diaconal role.

It is not until we get to the Heidelberg Catechism that we gain a clearer understanding of the Reformed teachings in terms easily accessible to the lay person. The law, the creeds, the sacraments and the Lord's Prayer are explained in simple biblical terms and form a core of discipleship training that remains relevant and beautiful to this very day. Effort is made to help believers apply these core beliefs to daily heart motivations and summons to action. *Diakonia* begins to emerge as an intrinsic hardwiring of the heart—a source of inspiration or incentive.

The more recent *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* makes many references to both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment as these were spoken by Jesus to the early church. What follows is a very brief summary of the *diaconal* content of each document.

1. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*

From the Preamble through to the final section on the New Creation, the development of a diaconal heart in the life of a believer is threaded throughout the Contemporary Testimony. One of the greatest encouragements toward the maturing of that heart is in the section on the Mission of God's People. With reference to the words of Jesus himself in Matthew 25, the Contemporary Testimony (para. 41) states,

the church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom to call everyone to know and follow Christ. . . . 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.

The testimony also teaches that, as God's people in new community, "the church is a gathering" equipped by the Spirit to live out "the ongoing story of God's reconciling love" and to work "for a world of justice and peace" (para. 39). That includes an active involvement in calling "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 are urged to "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" (para. 53). The Contemporary Testimony does not relegate that task to deacons, but assigns it to the whole church, clearly including every person who belongs to it.

The testimony concludes with a beautiful picture of the new creation, where God's "kingdom will fully come and the Lord will rule" (para. 55). As his people and by his grace, we can "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" (para. 57).

2. The Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed

It is impossible to read and believe these creeds without an awesome appreciation and gratitude for the work of God in creation, the gift of Jesus Christ in redemption, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the present and future.

Diakonia in these creeds is expressed in "the communion of the saints" and "the forgiveness of sins," which, if truly lived out by every believer, would fill our churches and inevitably our world with hearts of mercy. While believers labor and look toward "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting," our earthly labor could be described as a duty to use these gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of others.

3. The Heidelberg Catechism

As the writers of the catechism provide answers to questions related to the law, the creeds, the sacraments, and the Lord's Prayer, there is a con-

tinuous acknowledgment of intractable human sinfulness, the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus, and the ever-present strength of the Holy Spirit equipping us to live according to the desires of God. As much as it is clear that our works cannot earn us salvation, the motivations and actions of a diaconal heart will openly declare our love for God and his people. The assurance and confidence of our salvation should be the foundation on which a heart for the care for others is grown.

The comfort that “I am not my own” and that my Savior “makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live *for him*” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1, emphasis ours) should be enough to have us look at just *how* we live. What does that really mean? The catechism goes on to explain that all God wants of us is to love him with our *all*, and to love our neighbors as ourselves—a simple heart of *diakonia*.

“Because by faith I am a member of Christ,” and therefore called a Christian, “I am anointed . . . to strive with a free conscience against sin and the devil in this life” (Q&A 32).

The catechism’s explanation of the eighth commandment clearly describes a diaconal heart when it says “that I do whatever I can for my neighbor’s good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.”

4. The Canons of Dort

The Canons of Dort are statements of doctrine adopted by the Reformed Synod of Dort in 1618-19. That synod had an international dimension, since it was not only composed of the delegates of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands but also attended by twenty-seven representatives of foreign churches.

The Synod of Dort was held in view of the serious disturbance in the Reformed churches caused by the rise and spread of Arminianism. Arminius, a theological professor at the University of Leyden, and his followers departed from the Reformed faith in their teaching concerning five important points. They taught conditional election on the ground of foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace. These views were rejected by the synod, and the opposite views were embodied in what are now called the Canons of Dort.

In these canons, the synod set forth the Reformed doctrine on these points, namely, unconditional election, particular atonement, total depravity, invincible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. Although this last point makes reference to the working out of one’s salvation and the incentive believers have toward thanksgiving and good works, there is little mention of the believer’s service to others in acts of justice, mercy, or love.

5. The Belgic Confession

Article 20 focuses on the justice and mercy of God in Christ but offers no expectation for humankind to do likewise. Article 24 delves into the sanctification of sinners and speaks briefly about the believer’s motivation for good works. Article 28 brings forth a clear statement in describing the obligation of church members that should resonate in the diaconal heart:

All people are obliged to join and unite with [the church], keeping the unity of the church by submitting to its instruction and discipline, by bending

their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and by serving to build up one another, according to the gifts God has given them as members of each other in the same body.

6. The Belhar Confession

The language of unity, reconciliation, and justice is woven throughout the Belhar, but the final section (4) most clearly articulates the heart of *diakonia*. For the most part the Belhar simply recites Scripture when it articulates this most compelling diaconal challenge to the church in the globalized 21st century—the challenge to seek justice for the poor and destitute.

We believe

- that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;
- that God calls the church to follow him in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right . . . ;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

In summary, the task force observes that the historical confessions and the contemporary testimonies lead the church to a more fulsome self-understanding of her diaconal identity and mandate than is reflected in the current Church Order articles that pertain to the work of deacons.

D. *A historical summary of synodical reports and decisions concerning the delegation of deacons to major assemblies*

As mentioned above, Synod 2010 did not mandate the task force to make the biblical, theological, and historical case that deacons should participate in the major assemblies. Synod assumed the legitimacy of that argument, or at least believed it has been made adequately in the past to inform any future synod's deliberations. Ours is a *task force* after all and not a *study committee*, whose mandates are usually more comprehensive and whose recommendations generally require greater theoretical support. Still, we found it worthwhile to review the long and interesting history of the debate about deacons in the CRC. We detected, without surprise, that the trajectory of study committees and synodical decisions was moving toward seating deacons at synod until the women-in-office debate bumped it off course. Now that this debate is behind us and the Church Order has been amended accordingly, the way is clear to recapture the trajectory that was abandoned a few decades ago.

Many committees have studied the role of deacon and their presence at major assemblies in the CRC over the history of the denomination. Synodical reports have been both declined and (mostly) accepted, with varying degrees of action or change resulting from their recommendations. What follows is a brief summary of this history, and a full account can be found at www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/diakonia/A%20Summary%20of%20Synodical%20Reports,%20October%202011.docx.

Overture 17 in the *Agenda of Synod 1980* includes an “interpretive history” which might also be considered helpful for the reader, especially the analysis on page 587. This can be found at www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/diakonia/Overture%2017%20-%20Synod%201980.pdf.

The debate about seating deacons at the major assemblies of the CRCNA began in 1962 when Classis Chatham offered the ground that the office of deacon formed an integral part of the work of the church in carrying out a ministry of mercy. They stated that diaconal work is the work of Christ, and therefore the work of Christ’s church *as a whole*. Diaconal ministry should therefore be kept within the jurisdiction and authority of the church and not be entrusted to conferences that have no ecclesiastical authority. The report stated that diaconal work had become more complex and therefore required the engagement and cooperation of the whole church. The overture was defeated on the grounds that “insufficient scriptural evidence has been adduced to warrant such a change in the Church Order” (*Acts of Synod 1962*, p. 95). Classis Chatham overtured synod again the following year, this time offering significant biblical and theological justifications. Synod decided to recommend that the churches study this matter further because “the church is not ready for this innovation at the present time” (*Acts of Synod 1963*, p. 116). A study committee was assembled and asked to report to Synod 1965; the report was presented to Synod 1966.

The 1966 report concluded that some change should be made to the present method of delegation to major assemblies, based on the following grounds (*Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 125):

1. biblical recognition of the authority of all ecclesiastical offices, including that of deacon;
2. the importance of the priestly aspect of the church’s ministry as represented primarily by the deacons;
3. the large number of matters considered at the major assemblies which are primarily the concern of deacons; and
4. the recognized principles of the equality and unity of the offices.

The report specifically recommended that “synod declare that, in the light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions, it judges that there are no lawful objections to the delegation of deacons to the major assemblies of the church” and that “synod decide that *one* minister, *one* elder, and also *one* deacon be delegated to classes and synods, and that these three office-bearers shall be delegated with identical mandates and credentials” (*Acts of Synod 1966*, pp. 126-27). The *Acts of Synod 1966* indicate that this report was referred back to the study committee to answer a series of five questions and was also referred back to the churches for input (p. 23).

In 1967 the committee resubmitted its report along with a summary of responses from the churches and answers to the questions posed in 1966.

The responses provided by the churches led to these three conclusions (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 247):

- Most recognized “the need for some type of delegation of deacons to major assemblies,” but “there was also a concurrent hesitation to adopt equal representation with identical mandates.”
- Concern was expressed “about the possibility of losing the distinctiveness of the offices.”
- Questions were raised about whether the nature of the major assemblies is “purely judicial and regulatory” or a form of “the church-in-action”—“deliberating upon, planning, and deciding its whole prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry.”

The study committee offered comprehensive and substantial answers to all five questions posed by the previous synod. Nevertheless the advisory committee disagreed with their conclusions, and synod did not adopt the study committee’s recommendations. The advisory committee’s objections can be summed up as follows: the study committee failed to prove that “deacons by virtue of their office have authority to deal with all the matters that come before an ecclesiastical assembly”; it was not proved that “non-delegation of deacons to major assemblies does violence to the ‘unity and distinctiveness of the offices in Christ,’ or that this means that elders and ministers ‘lord it over’ deacons”; and the report tended toward “reducing the distinctiveness of the office of deacons” from that of elders (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 92).

In 1970 Classis Hamilton asked synod to study the question anew, and synod referred the request “to a study committee for a reevaluation of the decision of the Synod of 1967” (*Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 98). In 1972 the synodical study committee issued Report 32, offering both a majority and a minority report. The majority report dismissed the idea of seating deacons at major assemblies, saying that there were no sufficient biblical grounds for doing so and that arguments from the silence of Scripture (regarding deacons at major assemblies) deduced by previous committees were inconclusive. This report added that seating deacons at major assemblies would involve them in matters “outside the scope of their office”; that diaconal conferences would gain no authority “to implement decisions in the church”; and that CRWRC was functioning quite well without deacons at synod (*Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 365-69).

The minority report helpfully pointed out that Synod 1967 on the one hand admitted “that the delegation of deacons is neither prohibited nor demanded by Scripture and the Reformed confessions,” but, on the other hand, decided not to proceed with delegation on the ground that the committee did not prove Scripture *demanded* such a delegation (p. 373). To clarify, the minority report stated, “If Scripture neither prohibits nor demands such delegation, then the fact that no scriptural basis was adduced to demand delegation cannot be used a ‘ground’ for denying the delegation of deacons” (p. 374).

This report clearly stated, in its conclusion,

Delegation of deacons to major assemblies will not immediately bring diaconal service into larger attention and interest throughout our churches. But if we recognize that the church is a united body, and that all of its work is interrelated; that the scope of the ministry of mercy has taken on large global dimensions in

our day; and that the very presence of deacons at major assemblies can serve to focus the attention of the church on the fact that our compassionate Savior wills that the work of mercy shall stand in the center of the full interest of the church; then the presence of deacons at major assemblies can be a step in the direction of honoring Christ more fully in his compassion and mercy. The church has a great responsibility to show the mercy of Christ both in, and to, our troubled world. Let deacons be involved at the level of decision making to project the image of compassion and mercy in the church to a sick and despairing world. (Acts of Synod 1972, p. 381)

Synod 1972 had difficulty making a decision between these two reports but chose “not to move in the direction of delegating deacons to major assemblies at this time” while encouraging the churches “to continue giving constructive action to this matter” (p. 48).

Further reports in 1973 and 1975 and further dismissals or referrals back to classis led Classis Muskegon to decide in January 1978 to require that each member church send one minister, one elder, and one deacon to its classis meetings, who “shall convene together but then meet separately to discuss matters appropriate for that office.” This decision was appealed by Second CRC of Fremont, Michigan, and Synod 1978 upheld the appeal, dismissing the Muskegon initiative (Acts of Synod 1978, p. 115).

Noting no changes after the consideration of many reports on the issue, Richard R. De Ridder concluded in 1982 that “the time in which we live provides almost unlimited opportunities for the development of the office of deacon. It would be a severe loss to the church if the diaconal office is further subsumed under that of eldership” (*Delegation of Deacons to Classis and Synod: A Collation of Study Committee Reports, Overtures, and Decisions of Synods of the Christian Reformed Church 1861-1981*; this study is available at www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/diakonia/Delegation_DeRidder_Part1.pdf and www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/diakonia/Delegation_DeRidder_Part2.pdf).

Synod 1984 requested that the work of elders and deacons be more clearly distinguished to appease the conscience of those churches that were opposed to women in office. The *Agenda for Synod 1987* included a proposed plan for sending deacons to classis and requested “that synod not make a judgment concerning the delegation of deacons to synodical assemblies at this time” (pp. 398, 401). Synod 1987 approved all recommendations in that report (Report 31) except for those related to the delegation of deacons to classis.

In 1995, based on the experience of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada to which deacons were delegated and given the distinct emphasis on diaconal ministry in Canada, a report included in its recommendations the integration of deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination. Specifically it was recommended (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 317)

- to revise Church Order Article 40-a to read that each council should delegate a minister, an elder, and a deacon to classis.
- to revise Church Order Article 45 to state that “each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, and one deacon to the synod.”
- to appoint a study committee to work with “diaconal conferences and organizations to integrate their work, where desirable, into classical and synodical structures.”

Synod 1995 did not approve the recommendations (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 741).

In 1997 synod received an overture from Classis Muskegon requesting the addition of a supplement to Church Order Article 40-a that would permit a classis to seat deacons as delegates, “provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons” to its assembly (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 465). That year synod also received a communication from Classis Lake Erie that it had developed “a comprehensive classical vision and mission strategy statement” that led to a decision by all the churches in the classis to delegate “a pastor, an elder, and a deacon to all [of its] classis meetings” (p. 494). In response, Synod 1997 added the following supplement to Church Order Article 40-a (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 621):

The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder, provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to its meetings. Deacons delegated to classis shall be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders. The gender of diaconal delegates to a classis shall be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order.

Since then, Synods 2007 and 2009 have included additional qualifications to Church Order Supplement, Article 40-a (see *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 612; *Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 613).

III. Guiding principles

The grounds offered by Classis Grandville in 2010 suggest that there is a disconnect between Church Order articles and the church’s much richer self-understanding of its diaconal calling as these are articulated in the church’s testimonies and liturgical forms. The grounds also point to a need for the diaconal mission to be described in more complete, holistic, and robust terms that recognize both the intensified urgency of needs in our broken world, as well as the scope of the church’s giftedness as the Holy Spirit equips us to meet ever greater challenges.

The task force has undertaken a study of the biblical literature concerning the church’s mission as *diakonia* to the world, as well as a review of the lengthy history of the discussion within the CRC concerning the delegation of deacons to major assemblies. We also conducted a survey to gain a clearer understanding of the current level of diaconal engagement across the denomination, and the varieties of ways in which churches are organized for ministry. These sources have provided the task force with a number of insights that have guided our consideration of the Church Order and other related documents. The insights are the basis for the following guiding principles:

1. It is not simply the case that the church *has* deacons, but rather it is the case that the whole church *is itself called to diakonia*, which we understand as God-glorifying service that is rendered to the world in obedience to Christ. A key text is found in Ephesians 4:11-13:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service [Greek: *diakonia*], so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The biblical teaching that elaborates just what those “works of service” are that lead to “unity in the faith,” “knowledge of the Son of God,” maturity, and “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” is rich and vast and spans both testaments. Beginning in Genesis, with the summons to be in right relationship (*shalom*) with God and one another and to care for the creation; through the Old Testament calling of Israel to be constituted as a kind of “demonstration plot” among the nations, exemplifying the communal life of a holy people called to bring light and blessings to the nations; and on to the New Testament summons to follow Jesus into the world-renewing life of the kingdom, marked by both humble sacrificial service and radical neighbor love—the entire biblical narrative can be understood as an extended commentary of what it means to render service to God, others, and the whole creation. (A much fuller presentation of the theme of *diakonia* as found in the Bible can be found at www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/diakonia/Diakonia%20Remixed%20Biblical%20Perspective.doc.)

2. For that reason, *diakonia* cannot be reduced to simple acts of charity and the distribution of alms (as suggested by the use of Acts 6 in the form for ordination) but includes a much broader and richer mandate. The Contemporary Testimony articulates a broad and comprehensive mission for the church as a people gathered “to live out the story of God’s reconciling love . . . working for a world of justice and peace.” The scope of the Testimony’s vision for the church includes creation care, service to the poor, prayerful political participation, peacemaking, advocacy, economic stewardship, and education for prophetic watchfulness over our world. The Belhar Confession also adds heft when it reminds us that “the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”; and “that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.” The church must embrace a broad description of mission as urged by both the Contemporary Testimony and the Belhar Confession. As the form for the ordination of deacons suggests, deacons are called to lead the church in living out this high calling in all of its holistic multidimensionality, “ferently desiring to give life the shape of things to come.” Deacons are not called simply to perform acts of service *on behalf of the church* but to lead the whole church in faithful obedience to its multifaceted participation in the mission of God.
3. The church’s role in society is described thus not only in terms of mercy but also in terms of justice, reconciliation, and peacemaking. As Micah 6:8 reminds us, these two rich biblical ideas, justice and mercy, belong together, for justice is the public enactment of the mercy of God. Mercy, spoken of by itself, can often be misunderstood simply as charity, but coupled with justice, together they speak to the healing of relationships and the restoration of *shalom*. In terms of diaconal outreach to the poor,

mercy is analogous to relief that addresses immediate needs which are often symptomatic of deeper problems; but justice seeks to understand and address the root causes of poverty. The form for ordination charges deacons to “be prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society, and to be sensitive counselors to the victims of such evils.” For this reason the task force is recommending several changes in the language of the articles of the Church Order to reflect that more comprehensive understanding of *diakonia* and to render it more consistent with the language of the Contemporary Testimony, the Belhar Confession, and the forms for ordination. We also propose amending the current job description for deacons and other related denominational materials to be consistent with the Church Order.

4. The task force is guided by the “principle of parity” between the offices as this is stated in Church Order Article 2. We have been persuaded by numerous historical reports to multiple synods that the principle of parity is best honored when deacons are also appointed as delegates to serve in the major assemblies of the church. We observe that several study committees over the years have recommended the delegation of deacons to major assemblies. Synods have often concurred that the delegation of deacons is “neither prohibited nor demanded by Scripture and the Reformed confessions,” but have nevertheless consistently refrained from adopting recommendations that derive from that fact. The history of this discussion in the church is lengthy (see section II, D of this report) and, as has been noted previously, it is not within the mandate of the task force to make the argument again. Nevertheless the task force has proceeded with recommendations to amend the Church Order based on the precedent set in 1997 when synod approved delegation of deacons to classis by adding the following supplement to Church Order Article 40-a:

The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder, provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to its meetings. Deacons delegated to classis shall be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders. The gender of diaconal delegates to a classis shall be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order.

We also take note of Calvin Theological Seminary professor (emeritus) Henry De Moor’s comment on this decision. He writes,

It can be argued, therefore, that the CRCNA is gradually moving toward the view that it is a person’s ordination as such and not his or her specific office or mandate that qualifies a person for delegation to the classis. Or, to put it another way, the CRCNA may finally be drawing the logical conclusions regarding the parity of offices.

(Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary, p. 235)

De Moor also notes that many issues dealt with at classis (and we would add synod) have a diaconal dimension, such that it is fitting that deacons are present to help deliberate on them. He provides a template for revising Article 34 that the task force has found most helpful:

The major assemblies are composed of officebearers who are delegated by their constituent minor assemblies. The minor assemblies shall provide their delegates with the proper credentials which authorize them, *in a manner*

consistent with the uniqueness of the particular office, to deliberate and vote on all matters brought before the major assemblies. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which the delegate or the church of which the delegate is a member is particularly involved.

(*Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, p. 236)

5. Another related principle is that the delegation of deacons to major assemblies is not about equal representation, as if there should be some balance of power; but rather it is about the *full* representation of the *whole* church which these offices represent. When deacons are missing from major assemblies, the full voice of the church is not heard, nor is the full ministry of the church under discussion. The purpose of the major assemblies is not simply governance and adjudication but deliberation about the church's character and ministry, a deliberation in which the deacons ought surely to participate. It is our hope that the full participation of deacons at major assemblies may also help to nurture and advance the missional dimension of these deliberative assemblies.
6. Yet another guiding principle is one which we might call "minimal regulation for maximum engagement." The church has considerable "freedom in obedience" to structure itself for the greatest engagement by its members and for maximum kingdom impact in the world. For example, John Calvin states, "If the church requires it, we may not only without offense allow something to be changed but permit any observances previously in use among us to be abandoned" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.10.32). Reflecting on Calvin's handling of Church Order, one commentator concludes that, according to Calvin, "As long as the church is apostolically carrying out the task, the form of the office is not constrained to a particular historical or geographic interpretation of it" (Thea Leunk, "The Office of Deacon: Calvin's Ecclesiology, Geneva's Practice, and the CRC Diaconate," 1999).

In his Church Order commentary, Professor De Moor reminds us that John Calvin envisioned a minimum of regulations, flexible ones at that, but these were also to be manifestly biblical. De Moor cites Belgic Confession Article 32: "we reject all human innovations and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way. So we accept only what is proper to maintain harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God." The innovation in Acts 6, to appoint seven who would provide for the needs of widows, can be seen as such an innovation.

On this basis the task force is recommending that the Church Order provide greater flexibility concerning the length of terms of office to allow for greater continuity in ministry, sustainability of programs and relationships, greater development of diaconal gifts, and succession planning. Results of the survey suggest that there is a lingering perception that deacons are "elders in training" and also that deacons receive inadequate training. Our studies lead us to believe that longer terms of office along with more intentional training may help to unleash ministry potential, change the minimalist perception of the role of deacons, and lead to healthier churches with dynamic ministries. Of course, changing Church Order articles cannot, by itself, effect any sweeping change, but it can remove structural hindrances that inhibit flourishing diaconates.

IV. Proposed revisions to the Church Order and its Supplements

The Office of Deacon Task Force is proposing changes to the Church Order and its Supplement. Each change is linked to one or more of the six guiding principles as found in section III of this report, which function as grounds for each recommended revision. The revisions are not all of equal weight, nor will they each have equal impact. For example, the amendment in Article 1 in which the task force suggests including the critical text of Ephesians 4:12 will not make as great an impact on the administration of the church as the proposed changes to Article 45. Yet these revisions hang together as a single coherent shift in our understanding of *diakonia* in the church. Language matters, and it is important for the language of the Church Order to be both expansive in order to allow for a growing sense of ministry, and precise in order that the church may be well governed and function in good order.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Terry Woodnorth, chair; Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, reporter; and task force members Mr. Andrew Ryskamp and Mrs. Lori Wiersma when the report of the Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force is addressed.

B. That synod approve the following changes to the Church Order and its Supplements as indicated:

Note: **Boldface text** indicates changes from the current Church Order.

Current Article 1

- a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.
- b. The main subjects treated in this Church Order are The Offices of the Church, The Assemblies of the Church, The Task and Activities of the Church, and The Admonition and Discipline of the Church.

Proposed Article 1

- a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, desiring to **“equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:12)** and to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40) regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.
- b. [Remains the same]

Ground: See Guiding Principle 1.

Current Article 4

- a. In calling and electing to an office, the council shall ordinarily present to the congregation a nomination of at least twice the number to be elected. When the council submits a nomination which totals less than twice the number to be elected, it shall give reasons for doing so.
—Cf. Supplement, Article 4-a
- b. Prior to making nominations the council may give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons.
- c. The election by the congregation shall take place under the supervision of the council after prayer and in accordance with the regulations established by the council. Adult confessing members in good standing shall have the right to vote.
- d. After having called the elected persons to their respective offices and having announced their names, the council shall proceed to ordain or install them if no valid impediment has arisen. The ordination or installation shall take place in the public worship services with the use of the prescribed ecclesiastical forms.

Proposed Article 4

- a. In calling and electing to an office, the council shall ordinarily present to the congregation a nomination of at least twice the number **of suitably gifted persons** to be elected. When the council submits a nomination which totals less than twice the number to be elected, it shall give reasons for doing so.
—Cf. Supplement, Article 4-a
- b. Prior to making nominations the council may give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to **suitably gifted** persons.
- c. [Remains the same]
- d. [Remains the same]

Ground: See Guiding Principle 1.

Current Article 11

The calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ.

Proposed Article 11

The calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and **equip** the members **so that** the church of Jesus Christ **may be built up** (Eph. 4:12).

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, and 3.

Current Article 12

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, 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 officebearers, 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.

b. A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions or chaplaincy, or (2) is appointed directly by synod, or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

c. A minister of the Word may also serve the church in other work which relates directly to the calling of a minister, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that said work is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 12-c

Proposed Article 12

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, 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 officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline, and see to it that everything is done decently and in order. The minister, with the elders **and deacons**, shall exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism and **diaconal outreach**.

b. [Remains the same]

c. [Remains the same]

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 2 and 4.

Current Article 25

a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. As a rule a specified number of them shall retire from office each year. The retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and

obedient participation in the Lord's Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ's church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

Proposed Article 25

a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. **The length of term should be appropriate for continuity and succession of ministry leadership, accountability for ministry outcomes, and the regular infusion and flourishing of gifts as the Spirit endows each generation.** Retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.

b. [Remains the same]

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people. **Deacons shall lead the congregation in ways that inspire faithful stewardship of their time, talent, and resources and so give life in this world the shape of God's kingdom by calling the members to be ambassadors of reconciliation in all areas of life. Thus, deacons shall create and encourage participation in structures and ministries that use member gifts in areas of compassion, community transformation, creation care, justice, stewardship, and pastoral care, both locally and globally.**

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, 3, and 6.

Current Article 34

The major assemblies are composed of officebearers who are delegated by their constituent minor assemblies. The minor assemblies shall provide their delegates with proper credentials which authorize them to deliberate and vote on matters brought before the major assemblies. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which the delegate or the church of which the delegate is a member is particularly involved.

Proposed Article 34

The major assemblies are composed of officebearers who are delegated by their constituent minor assemblies. The minor assemblies shall provide their delegates with proper credentials which authorize them, **in a manner consistent with the uniqueness of their particular office,** to deliberate and vote on **all** matters brought before the major assemblies. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which the delegate or the church of which the delegate is a member is particularly involved.

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 4 and 5.

Current Article 35

a. In every church there shall be a council composed of the minister(s), the elders, and the deacons. Those tasks which belong to the common administration of the church, such as the calling of a pastor, the approval of nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern, are the responsibility of the council.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 35-a

b. In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the elders and the minister(s) of the Word. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of elder are the responsibility of the consistory.

c. In every church there shall be a diaconate composed of the deacons of the church. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of deacon are the responsibility of the diaconate. The diaconate shall give an account of its work to the council.

Proposed Article 35

a. [Remains the same]

b. In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the elders and the minister(s) of the Word. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of elder are the responsibility of the consistory. **The consistory shall give an account of its work to the council.**

c. [Remains the same]

Ground: See Guiding Principle 4.

Current Article 40

a. The council of each church shall delegate a minister and an elder to the classis. If a church is without a minister, or the minister is prevented from attending, two elders shall be delegated. Officebearers who are not delegated may also attend classis and may be given an advisory voice.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 40-a

b. The classis shall meet at least every four months, unless great distances render this impractical, at such time and place as was determined by the previous classical meeting.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 40-b

c. The ministers shall preside in rotation, or a president may be elected from among the delegates; however, ordinarily the same person shall not preside twice in succession.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 40-a and -c

Proposed Article 40

a. The council of each church shall delegate a minister, an elder, **and a deacon** to the classis. If a church is without a minister, or the minister is prevented from attending, **another elder** shall be delegated **in place**

of the minister. Officebearers who are not delegated may also attend classis and may be given an advisory voice.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 40-a

b. [Remains the same]

c. [Remains the same]

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 4 and 5.

Current Supplement, Article 40-a

The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder, provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to its meetings. Deacons delegated to classis shall be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders. The gender of diaconal delegates to a classis shall be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order. Delegates who believe the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials. Their names, along with their protests, shall be included in the official record of each classis meeting. If a classis so desires, it may also invite emerging churches to delegate two officebearers to the meetings of classis.

(Acts of Synod 1997, p. 621)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2007, p. 612)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2009, p. 613)

Note: A classis must decide whether the delegation of deacons by the member churches of classis is permissible. If classis has so decided, then each congregation will delegate three delegates (a minister, elder, and deacon) to all the meetings of classis.

Proposed Supplement, Article 40-a

The gender of delegates to a classis shall be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order. Delegates who believe the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials. Their names, along with their protests, shall be included in the official record of each classis meeting. If a classis so desires, it may also invite emerging churches to delegate **three** officebearers to the meetings of classis.

(Acts of Synod 1997, p. 621)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2007, p. 612)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2009, p. 613)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2013, p. xxx)

Current Supplement, Article 40-a and -c

Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa

a. The council of each church shall delegate a minister and two elders to the classis. If a church is without a minister or the minister is prevented from attending, three elders may be delegated. Officebearers

who are not delegated also may attend classis and may be given an advisory voice.

c. The presiding officers of classis shall be selected from officebearers within the classis. The same presiding officers shall not be chosen twice in succession.

(*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 16)

Proposed Supplement, Article 40-a and -c

Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa

a. The council of each church shall delegate a minister, **an elder, and a deacon** to the classis. If a church is without a minister or a minister, **elder, or deacon delegate** is prevented from attending, **any combination of three officebearers may be delegated**. Officebearers who are not delegated also may attend classis and may be given an advisory voice.

c. The presiding officers of classis shall be selected from officebearers within the classis. **Ordinarily** the same presiding officers shall not be chosen twice in succession.

(*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 16)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2013*, p. xxx)

Current Article 42

a. The classis shall be responsible for appointing persons to provide counsel and advice to churches. The classis shall appoint church visitors to visit each church in classis on a yearly basis. The classis shall appoint classical counselors to provide advice to any church in the process of calling a minister of the Word.

b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of officebearers chosen for their experience and counsel, with teams composed of two ministers or one minister and one elder. Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 42-b

c. The classical counselor's task is to ensure that a church in the process of calling a minister of the Word observes ecclesiastical regulations and sound process. The counselor shall be an officebearer, normally a minister of the Word, whose ministerial credentials or membership resides in a congregation other than the church in the process of calling a minister. The classical counselor shall provide classis with a written report during and after the calling process.

Proposed *Article 42*

a. [Remains the same]

b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of office-bearers chosen for their experience and counsel. **Team composition should include a minister and at least one other officebearer.** Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 42-b

c. [Remains the same]

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 4 and 5.

Current *Article 45*

The synod is the assembly representing the churches of all the classes. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to the synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 45

Proposed *Article 45*

The synod is the assembly representing the churches of all the classes. Each classis shall delegate **one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer** to the synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 45

Grounds: See Guiding Principle 4 and 5.

Current *Article 62*

Offerings for benevolence shall be received regularly in the worship services. Offerings also shall be received for other ministries of the congregation and the joint ministries of the churches.

Proposed *Article 62*

Opportunity will be given regularly, as part of our worship, to offer gifts, both financial and otherwise, to develop and sustain ministries of the congregation, locally within its own community, the shared ministries of the denomination globally, and other causes that the church supports.

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 2 and 3.

Current *Article 64*

a. Each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, and to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers.

b. Each church shall provide opportunities for continued instruction of adult members. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.

Proposed Article 64

a. Each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers, **and to equip them to fulfill their Christian vocation in the church and in the world.**

b. [Remains the same]

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1 and 2.

Current section heading: D. Missions

Proposed section heading: **D. Ministries of the Church**

Current Table of Contents title for Article 73: The Church's Mandate to Missions

Proposed Table of Contents title for Article 73: The Church's Mandate to **Ministry**

Current Article 73

a. In obedience to Christ's Great Commission, the churches must bring the gospel to all people at home and abroad, in order to lead them into fellowship with Christ and his church.

b. In fulfilling this mandate, each council shall stimulate the members of the congregation to be witnesses for Christ in word and deed and to support the work of home and world missions by their interest, prayers, and gifts.

Proposed Article 73

a. **In response to both the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor and the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, the churches must strengthen and prepare their members to engage in holistic mission in the world.**

b. **Each local church shall engage its community as a living demonstration that God's kingdom reign is present, that redemption has been won, and that healing and reconciliation are possible. In this engagement the local congregation shall offer an invitation for others to come and experience new life in Christ and carry out all the functions of a missionary congregation (worship, faith nurture, pastoral care, and missions).**

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, and *Additional grounds for proposed changes to Articles 73-77* (below).

Current Table of Contents title for Article 74: The Mission of the Congregation

Proposed Table of Contents title for Article 74: The **Ministry** of the Congregation

Current *Article 74*

- a. Each church shall bring the gospel to unbelievers in its own community. This task shall be sponsored and governed by the council. This task may be executed, when conditions warrant, in cooperation with one or more neighboring churches.
- b. Each church shall carry on a ministry of mercy. The deacons shall enable the needy under their care to make use of Christian institutions of mercy. They shall confer and cooperate with diaconates of neighboring churches when this is desirable for the proper performance of their task. They may also seek mutual understandings with agencies in their community which are caring for the needy, so that the gifts may be distributed properly.

Proposed Article 74

- a. Each church **must interpret its missionary calling for its unique context. The council shall be responsible to provide leadership and training, and to facilitate planning and enabling structures to help the church fulfill its evangelistic and diaconal calling. Churches are urged to work together with neighboring churches, appropriate community resources, classical and denominational systems, and whatever gifts God has placed in their reach in carrying out this task.**
- b. Each church **shall ensure that deacons and elders are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.**

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, and *Additional grounds for proposed changes to Articles 73-77* (below).

Current Table of Contents title for Article 75: The Mission of the Classis

Proposed Table of Contents title for Article 75: The **Ministry** of the Classis

Current *Article 75*

- a. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks, each classis shall have a classical home missions committee.
- b. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their ministry of mercy. The classes themselves may perform this ministry when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer this task, each classis shall have a classical diaconal committee.

Proposed Article 75

a. The classes shall **have a ministry plan that articulates how they will support the churches in meeting their missionary mandate, as well as how they will advance the work of the kingdom in the region the classis represents. Classis shall bridge the resources of the local churches with the resources of the denomination. The CRC Ministry Plan shall address how this is to be accomplished.**

b. Each classis shall ensure that deacons and elders are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, and *Additional grounds for proposed changes to Articles 73-77* (below).

Current Table of Contents title for Article 76: Denominational Ministries in North America

Proposed Table of Contents title for Article 76: **Denominational Ministries**

Current Article 76

a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism, and shall also carry on such home missions activities as are beyond their scope and resources. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be governed by synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 76-a

b. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministry of mercy, and shall carry on such work as is beyond their scope and resources. Synod shall appoint a diaconal committee to administer the denominational ministry of mercy. The work of this committee shall be governed by synodical regulations.

Proposed Article 76

a. Synod shall encourage and assist **churches and classes to fulfill their respective roles. Synod shall also appoint denominational ministries that engage churches and classes in jointly owned ministries that have national or global scope. Synod shall ensure that an overall plan is established that gives vision and coordination to the whole.**

b. Synod shall **ensure that elders and deacons are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.**

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, and *Additional grounds for proposed changes to Articles 73-77* (below).

Current Supplement, Article 76-a

The synodical regulations referred to in Article 76 may be found in the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions (Acts of Synod 1992, pp. 741-46 and subsequent revisions thereof).

Proposed: That Supplement, Article 76-a **be deleted**.

Current Table of Contents title for Article 77: Denominational Ministries Abroad

Proposed Table of Contents title for Article 77: **Synodical Governance of Ministries**

Current *Article 77*

a. Synod shall encourage and assist the joint world mission work of the churches by regulating the manner in which this task is to be performed, providing for its support, and encouraging the congregations to call and support missionaries. To administer these activities, synod shall appoint a denominational world missions committee, whose work shall be governed by synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 77-a

b. The denominational diaconal committee shall extend the ministry of mercy of the congregations and classes worldwide.

Proposed Article 77

Synod shall regulate the work of denominational ministries by way of the Constitution and decisions of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Grounds: See Guiding Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, and *Additional grounds for proposed changes to Articles 73-77* (below).

Current Supplement, Article 77-a

Synod regulates the work of the world missions committee by way of the Constitution and decisions of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Proposed: That Supplement, Article 77-a **be deleted**.

Additional grounds for proposed changes to Articles 73-77:

1. These changes grow out of the belief that the whole church is called to *diakonia*.
2. The new language is inclusive of all the denominational ministries, not just select ministries.
3. The changes reflect a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the church's ministry.
4. Article 77 incorporates the existing Supplement, Articles 76-a and 77-a, applies it to all denominational ministries, and brings the Church Order into alignment with the governance realities of the denomination.
5. These changes integrate the roles and mandates of the offices into the mission of the church.
6. The changes recognize the continuities between regional and global ministries and the growing collaborations between ministries.

C. That synod, upon adoption of proposed Church Order changes above, adopt the following timetable for phasing in the implementation of changes to the Church Order:

1. All classes should implement Article 40 for delegation of a deacon to classis by the end of the year 2014.
2. All classes should implement Article 45 for delegation to Synod 2015.
3. Classes that already delegate deacons to its meetings are encouraged to implement Article 45 for delegation to Synod 2014.

D. That synod adopt the following revision to the Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons (changes noted in **boldface text**):

Congregation of Jesus Christ:

Today we celebrate God's gift of faithful leadership for his people. We joyfully thank him for elders and deacons who have served well and completed their terms of office. And we praise him for providing their successors.

In the officebearers of the church we see the love of Christ for his people. As the Lord of the church he appoints leaders and by his Spirit equips them, so that believers may grow in faith, develop disciplined Christian living, serve others in selfless love, and share with all the good news of salvation. **The apostle Paul stated this most clearly when he wrote to the church in Ephesus, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). And Jesus Christ taught us the spirit of true leadership when he said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26-28).**

Elders serve by governing the church in Christ's name. They received this task when Christ entrusted the apostles and their successors with the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19). Elders are thus responsible for the spiritual well-being of God's people. They must provide true preaching and teaching, regular celebration of the sacraments, and faithful counsel and discipline while keeping in confidence those matters entrusted to them. And they must promote fellowship and hospitality among believers, ensure good order in the church, and stimulate witness to all people.

Deacons serve by **leading and equipping the church to serve its members and the world in a rich diversity of ministries, awakening compassion, demonstrating mercy, seeking justice, and collaborating with God's Spirit for the transformation of persons and communities. In imitation of Christ's mercy, deacons summon the church to help relieve victims of injustice, equip the church for ministries of reconciliation**

and peacemaking, seek opportunities for advocacy, and call God's people to faithful stewardship of the gifts of creation. By this they show that Christians live by the Spirit of the kingdom, fervently desiring to give life the shape of things to come. Deacons are therefore called to **identify and develop gifts in both the church and community**, assess needs, promote **generous stewardship**, and **offer wise and respectful care for the poor.** By adding to all this words of encouragement and hope, deacons demonstrate in word and deed the care of the Lord himself.

Now we intend to ordain elders and deacons and to install them for terms of service in this congregation. Those appointed to the office of elder are [names]. Those appointed to the office of deacon are [names].

To express your acceptance of these offices, you are asked to stand, and here in the presence of God and his church, to answer the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation God himself is calling you to these holy offices?

Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life?

Do you subscribe to the doctrinal standards of this church, rejecting all teaching which contradicts them?

Do you promise to do the work of your offices faithfully, in a way worthy of your calling and in submission to the government and discipline of the church?

Answer [by each officebearer]: I do, God helping me.

The officiating minister shall then say [the laying on of hands at this point is optional]:

God our heavenly Father, who has called you to these sacred offices, guide you by his Word, equip you with his Spirit, and so prosper your ministries that his church may increase and his name be praised. Amen.

Charge to the Elders

I charge you, elders, to “**keep watch over** yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Be a friend and Christlike example to children. Give clear and cheerful guidance to young people. By word and example, bear up God's people in their pain and weakness, and celebrate their joys with them. Hold in trust all sensitive matters confided to you. Encourage the aged to persevere in God's promises. Be wise counselors who support and strengthen the pastor. Be compassionate, yet firm and consistent in rebuke and discipline. Know the Scriptures, which are “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Pray continually for the church. Remember at all times that if you would truly give spiritual leadership in the household of faith, you must be completely mastered by your Lord (1 Tim. 3:2-7).

Charge to the Deacons

I charge you deacons, to inspire faithful **ministries of service to one another, to the larger community, and to the world. Remind us that the Lord requires us “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8).** Prompt us to seize new opportunities to love God, our neighbors, and the creation with acts of generous sharing, joyful hospitality, thoughtful care for the poor, and wise stewardship of all of God’s gifts. Weigh our opportunities for giving and service, that we might use the church’s resources discerningly. Offer wise care to victims of injustice, and teach us holistic responses that respect their dignity and mend the broken relationships that contribute to poverty. With respectful compassion for the needy and awareness of the often hidden needs of the wealthy, teach us to minister to rich and poor alike, both within and outside the church. **Encourage all with words that bring hope to their hearts and with deeds that bring joy into their lives. Show us by your example how to be prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society, and to be sensitive counselors to victims of such evils.** Let your lives be above reproach and live as examples of Christ Jesus, looking to the interests of others. **And in all your ministries help us anticipate and participate in the renewal of all things when God’s kingdom comes.**

Charge to the Congregation

I charge you, people of God, to receive these officebearers as Christ’s gift to the church. Recognize in them the Lord’s provision for healthy congregational life. Hold them in honor; take their counsel seriously; respond to them with obedience and respect; accept their help with thanks. **Wholeheartedly participate in the ministries into which they lead you.** Sustain them in prayer and encourage them with your support, especially when they feel the burden of their office. Acknowledge them as the Lord’s servants among you.

Do you, congregation, pledge to receive them as you have been charged?

Answer [by the congregation in unison]: We do, God helping us.

Prayer

Our merciful Father in heaven, we thank you that you have provided faithful and gifted people to serve as elders and deacons. As these new officebearers assume their responsibilities, fill them with your Spirit, endow them with your wisdom, and grant them strength. Make them faithful workers in your vineyard. Under their guidance may your church grow in every spiritual grace, in faith which is open and unashamed, and in the committed service that promotes your reign in the world. Help them to perform their duties with enthusiasm and humility. In their work, grant them a sense of sustained awe which is rooted in daily adoration of you, their Lord. Through them may your name be honored and your church be served.

Help us, your people, to accept them gladly, encourage them always, and respect them for the sake of your precious Son, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

E. That synod adopt the following revisions to the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting to reflect the proposed changes to Church Order Article 42-b:

1. *Current wording on page 2 of the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting*

II. Clear statement of purpose

A. *Church Order Article 42-b specifies the practice and purpose of church visiting:*

- a. The classis shall appoint at least one committee composed of two of the more experienced and competent officebearers, two ministers, or one minister and one elder, to visit all its churches once a year.
- b. The church visitors shall ascertain whether the officebearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and properly promote the edification of the congregation and the extension of God's kingdom. They shall fraternally admonish those who have been negligent, and help all with advice and assistance.
- c. The churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious problems arise.
- d. The church visitors shall render to classis a written report of their work.

Proposed revision for section II, A

The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of officebearers chosen for their experience and counsel. Team composition should include a minister and at least one other officebearer. Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis with a written report of their work.

2. *Additional revisions may be warranted to the following sections the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting:*

- a. Section IV, A (Role of council; p. 3) because the newly adopted Church Order articles would be more inclusive of deacons.
- b. Section IV, D (Role of the deacon; p. 7) would require amendment due to adopted changes articulated in describing the role of the deacon in Church Order Articles 4, 25-c, 35-a, 35-c, 65, and 74.
- c. Section IV, D (Role of the deacon; pp. 7-8)—the sample questions offered in the guide should be reviewed in order to embrace the new description of the role of deacons.

F. That synod mandate the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture to consider how the inclusion of deacons at major assemblies will affect the culture and structure of the CRCNA.

G. That synod adopt the following proposal for implementing the ongoing resourcing of a revitalized diaconate:

Resourcing a Re-imagined Diaconate

The task force realizes that putting the above guiding principles and Church Order changes into place requires a major rethinking of how the CRC does ministry. At a community level, it places new leadership expectations on the local diaconate. At a national level, it assumes that deacons have input into the diaconal dimension of the CRCNA's ministry planning. While pointing deacons to current resources may be helpful for training and dialogue, the task force would also recommend significant coordination and planning between the appropriate agencies and institutions of the CRC so that they connect with churches and classes to facilitate the implementation of the principles and concomitant structure changes.

The task force has catalogued a significant list of resources deacons can use, whether deacons work in a more traditional capacity or whether they engage and oversee significant transformational ministry. Discussions were held with some of the organizations that are focused on leadership development, including the training for deacons. This included Calvin Theological Seminary, Diaconal Ministries of Canada, World Renew, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Faith Alive Christian Resources, CRCNA Network, and Volunteers in Service. A sample of exciting models and resources in place are as follows:

- Diaconal Ministries of Canada's network of Diaconal Developers.
- Strong deacon conferences in many classes, especially within Canada, or regional organizations like Volunteers in Service, and Volunteers in Action.
- Home Missions' collaboration with community transformation resources in church planting efforts, and development of coaches that facilitate the creation of missional communities.
- Communities First Association's network of community transformation coaching.
- The 2009 "Power of With" Conference, facilitated by World Renew, demonstrated how churches can work with their community's resources to work for the physical and spiritual transformation of that community.
- Numerous training events and resources that come from many of the above organizations.

Some ideas for new support and collaboration:

- Using the model of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to provide capacity building events, grants, and training for a re-imagined diaconate.

- Regular collaborative events like the “Power of With” Conference to bring the many supportive organizations together to build vision and adapt models for the future.
- Specific degrees/certificates/courses of study at our educational institutions to prepare people for leadership for and with a re-imagined diaconate.

Next Steps

The development of this report and its recommendations has already led to discussions on how to support deacons and churches as they learn and strategize their way to being stronger missional communities. While this effort will be strengthened by the recommended changes in the Church Order, they are not dependent on them since strengthening and involving the diaconate for transforming our communities is something to which the whole church is called.

World Renew is encouraged to continue to facilitate some of the collaborative efforts mentioned above. Current budgets will limit this to collaboration and healthy networking to support deacons and churches in being missional communities of transformation. Additional funding will be sought to bring larger groups of leaders together from various organizations and geographic regions of the denomination. Communication channels, such as the CRC Network, will keep churches and their diaconates current on the support available to build their capacity and ability for ministry. These efforts need to be noted by the BOT and CRCNA planning efforts so that they can be appropriately incorporated into the CRCNA and respective agency plans, as well as reported regularly to synod as part of the strategic plan updates.

Recommendations

1. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to ask World Renew to take the lead role in facilitating the collaboration and networking necessary to support deacons, as deacons implement and live out the changes recommended in this report. This will be done primarily by bringing leaders of resourcing organizations together for effective collaboration.
2. That the Executive Director of the CRCNA ensure that the collaboration and networking described in Recommendation G, 1 be integrated into the strategic planning processes and goals of the CRC.
3. That the Executive Director prepare a report to Synod 2014 in conjunction with the agencies that are involved in supporting the deacons in ministry. The report will include goals set and progress made in relation to supporting deacons in their new roles, based on the changes made to the Church Order.

H. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of the Office of Deacon Task Force and dismiss the task force.

Office of Deacon Task Force

Mariano Avila

Roy Berkenbosch (reporter)

Greta Luimes

Andrew Ryskamp (staff adviser)

Bonnie Smith

Lori Wiersma

Terry Woodnorth (chair)

Note: Richard Jones was appointed by the Board of Trustees to serve on the task force but was unable to serve after its first meeting.

The Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II (DLPG II) wishes to express deep appreciation for the opportunity and honor to serve the CRCNA. The work was challenging and brought us to a realization that the *ministry of racial reconciliation* is a calling that will require God's people to submit humbly to one another.

In its work and in this report, the DLPG II included Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, institutions of the CRCNA. We extend our gratitude for their commitment to join in this effort with fellow CRCNA ministry leaders. Our work was enriched by their presence in our dialogue.

The DLPG II recognizes the complexity of the issue before us, and that the recommendations we have submitted will require a commitment of additional financial and human resources. We believe that the DLPG II has fulfilled its mandate from Synod 2011, and we humbly submit this report for your consideration, approval, and endorsement.

I. Background

Meeting in Palos Heights, Illinois, Synod 2009 instructed the Board of Trustees (BOT) to have the denomination's executive director "convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 589).

The first Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (DLPG I) was duly formed and presented its report to Synod 2011 (see Appendix A). Synod's response to the report contained both affirmation and critique. This ambivalence is captured in the advisory committee's introductory advice to synod to "proceed with the report's intentionality and immediacy where possible, and to pause with careful reconsideration where necessary" (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 858).

In this spirit, synod then proceeded to adopt, in slightly modified form, seven of the original twelve DLPG I recommendations.

Synod affirmed "the direction of the report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group with respect to increasing multiethnic representation in the senior-level positions of the CRCNA." Synod then adopted the following statement of vision: "To reflect a multiethnic, multicultural leadership that models the report approved by Synod 1996, *God's Diverse and Unified Family* (GDUF)." Synod went on to state, "It is essential that this vision for denominational leadership have an impact on every denominational entity . . ." (*Acts 2011*, p. 859).

In addition, delegates adopted a goal for multiethnic hiring: "That all future hires be made in accordance with the CRCNA's current ministry plan scorecard diversity objectives with its goal of 25 percent racial minority leaders in CRCNA positions of senior leadership (level 16 and above)" (*Acts 2011*, p. 860).

Synod also affirmed the report's recommendation "that all senior leaders incorporate equitable diversity practices in their employee hiring, training, communication, and management processes. These diversity practices are to be jointly developed and owned by senior leaders in consultation with the Office of Race Relations and clearly articulated so that every senior leader

knows exactly what diversity practices are expected. Senior leaders are to be held accountable by way of their annual performance evaluations for using these jointly-owned diversity practices” (*Acts 2011*, p. 860).

Further, Synod 2011 adopted recommendations requiring mentoring for all new hires (see *Acts 2011*, pp. 860-61), encouraging yearly cross-cultural diversity training as part of professional development for “all senior leaders, present and future” (p. 866), and mandating that “search committees for senior positions include at least two members from different ethnic minorities in their membership” (see *Acts 2011*, p. 867).

But Synod 2011 did not approve several key DLPG I recommendations¹ and concluded that there was significant work yet to be done—particularly on the recommendations that it did not adopt.² Consequently, Synod 2011 decided that a second Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (DLPG II) should be formed, and that it have both broader representation and an expanded mandate.

II. The Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II makeup and mandate

Synod 2011 directed the BOT to “appoint an expanded task force . . . that includes an ethnically and geographically diverse membership with the following broader mandate, and that the director of Race Relations will serve in an advisory role as requested by the task force” (*Acts 2011*, p. 867).

Indeed, our planning group was considerably expanded from the DLPG I and included many more stakeholders, both as a core planning group and especially with regard to inclusivity by way of information gathering and the deliberation processes. The planning group believes the specificity and clarity of our recommendations are evidence of this broader, more diverse involvement.

Synod provided a broader mandate “to develop further short-term and long-term strategies for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination and report through the BOT to Synod 2013”³ (*Acts 2011*, p. 867). Yet even as synod broadened the mandate, it also specifically directed the planning group to review those recommendations it did not accede to in the light of the following concerns:

- The role of the Office of Race Relations.
- The addition of measurable goals.
- The inclusion of strategies that focus on raising up, mentoring, and providing experience to diverse leaders at all levels and that foster a multiethnic leadership development plan in local congregations, classes, regional networks, and denominational offices.

This is both a very broad and a very specific mandate. In order to do it justice, the planning group found it necessary to

- review and add strategic “meat” to several recommendations passed by Synod 2011.
- revise several recommendations in the light of synod’s specific instructions to the planning group.

¹ See *Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 867-68; Recommendations B, 2, 3, 4, 5-b, -c, -d, 9-b, and -c.

² See Appendix B for actions of Synod 2011 regarding all DLPG I recommendations.

³ The detailed mandate that guided the work of the planning group is found in Appendix B.

- add several new recommendations that the planning group judges are required to complete and make progress in implementing the entire package of recommendations—both those passed by Synod 2011 and those proposed within this report to Synod 2013.

In short, the planning group has essentially written a set of recommendations that, taken as a whole, responds to both the intent and the specific instructions mandated by synod. Although we have drawn heavily from the work done previously, the planning group believes these recommendations can be considered on their own merits and, if passed, will complete and facilitate the implementation of the work begun by DLPG I and Synod 2011.

III. DLPG II materials and processes

In addition to the experience, expertise, and thoughts of the planning group members, we more purposefully engaged our mandate by using, among other resources and processes, the following materials and methods:

- The report of DLPG I (see Appendix A), the synodical decisions of 2011 (see Appendix B), and the 1996 CRC synodical report *God's Diverse and Unified Family*, which underpins much of the work we have done.
- An evaluation of the results of the "Survey for Increasing Multiethnic Participation within the Leadership Structures of the CRCNA" conducted by the DLPG I in early 2010.
- The planning group conducted a community meeting and consulted with members and multiethnic leaders of CRC churches and classes in Los Angeles, gathering significant information on how to promote diversity and ethnic leadership within one's church. We also gathered practices and ideas for promoting collaboration within and among other churches, classes, and denominations. Most important, the planning group gathered ideas on what our denomination can do to support all of these important regional and local activities.
- The planning group formulated the first draft of our recommendations and sent them to CRC ministry directors (Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, World Renew, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Office of Race Relations) and the presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. We subsequently met with them and requested their feedback on the recommendations, and we listened to their recommendations for the work of the DLPG II.
- The planning group revised the recommendations and again sent them to ministry directors, heads of educational institutions, and other senior ministry staff in the denomination. With this feedback we prepared a final version of the report and recommendations.

Although the DLPG II alone is responsible for these final recommendations, we are deeply indebted to those respondents who invested significant time and energy in giving us feedback and advice.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Bing Goei, Rev. Emmett A. Harrison, and Rev. Joel R. Boot when the report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II is addressed.

Recruitment

B. That synod mandate the executive director, in consultation with the directors of Human Resources, Race Relations, and others as deemed appropriate, to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the identification and recruitment of multiethnic leadership in denominational positions. This plan shall include the developing and establishment of the following:

1. A better and broader system for identifying candidates, including
 - a. A database of multiethnic candidates available for future positions, with names gathered from but not limited to CRCNA agencies, multiethnic focused entities, classes, educational institutions, and local CRC churches.
 - b. A system for contacting potential candidates beyond the CRC by collaborative recruitment ventures with denominations and interdenominational groups such as the Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Covenant Church, Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., the National Association of Evangelicals, and other Christian organizations.
2. A strong focus on attracting, recruiting, and retaining multiethnic leaders by creating
 - a. A welcoming environment of hospitality in CRCNA ministry offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario, as well as in every regional CRCNA office (i.e., purposefully build a culture and climate of care that demonstrates mutual respect for each other).
 - b. An awareness of the compelling ministry opportunities and challenges available in the CRC.
 - c. Funded internships for the purpose of recruiting ethnic minority leaders and establishing a pool of ethnic minority candidates for future hires within our denomination and the broader Christian community.

3. Clear accountability

Each CRC agency, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary will submit, as part of their strategic plan, diversity goals and timelines in their leadership, administrative, and regional ministry teams. Annual reports to and by the BOT will show how these strategic plans are being accomplished and shall be included in the executive director's annual Diversity Report. This Diversity Report from the executive director shall be a standing item on the BOT agenda.

Timeline: The plan shall be developed and reported to the BOT by February 2014, and shall include an implementation plan with specific timelines and accountability plans.

Training

C. That synod affirm the importance of increasing and improving denominational training efforts for all ethnic minority groups (as well as for the denomination at large) by focusing on equipping for service at the congregational, classical, and denominational levels; developing awareness, ownership, and commitment to the ministries and mission of the CRCNA; and enhancing unity by dismantling racism and promoting diversity. The following elements are essential in this training effort:

1. Review, enhance, and promote existing materials and practices.
 - a. The executive director will assemble an in-house task force to review current training resources and determine what additional resources could be added (e.g., providing basic training related to history, polity, leadership, and so forth).
 - b. Based on the modules provided, local churches, classes, and agencies are encouraged to develop and conduct orientation programs for all members, including topics on antiracism strategies and diversity education, especially for greater diversity in leadership bodies.
2. Schedule and arrange training events such as regional conferences and workshops, Days of Encouragement, binational conferences, and the Multiethnic Conference where recommended training materials (see Recommendation C, 1, a above) will be used and promoted.
3. Promote continuing education and learning communities through mentoring and coaching.
4. Enhance professional development for staff through ongoing in-service training and professional development opportunities in diversity education and cultural sensitivity for all staff. This will help ensure that employees remain current in their knowledge and best practices in diversity, and will encourage and support attainment of diversity goals and build in accountability.

Timeline: To begin immediately upon adoption by Synod 2013.

Equal Opportunity Action Plan for Human Resources

D. That synod mandate the executive director to instruct the director of Human Resources, the director of the Office of Race Relations, and the CRC mission and ministry directors to develop an action plan that includes establishing annual reviews of all employment policies and practices related to recruitment, hiring, performance management, promotions, and demotions to ensure equitable treatment of all staff. The action plan will include specific, measurable, and quantifiable goals and objectives.

Timeline: Report to Board of Trustees in February 2014.

Job Descriptions

E. That synod affirm that all job postings and job requirements will continue to be thoroughly reviewed by the offices of Human Resources and Race Relations. These offices will work with CRC ministries to discern an appropriate process or team of people to review job descriptions in a way that removes potential barriers to diversity.

Timeline: Ongoing.

Nomination Process for Denominational Leadership

F. That synod direct all CRC denominational boards and the Board of Trustees to adopt the goal of 25 percent multiethnic representation—the same goal that synod has adopted for itself and for senior denominational staff. The strategies to achieve this goal shall include the following:

1. The nomination processes for agency boards, educational institution boards, specialized ministry advisory committees, and the Board of Trustees shall ensure that the goal of 25 percent multiethnic representation on boards is achieved.
2. Identification and selection of potential multiethnic nominees who primarily have a heart for God and for his people and a passion for the CRC.
3. Inform and educate CRC members regarding the need to solicit multiethnic nominees at the congregational and classical levels.
4. Encourage pastors to solicit multiethnic members to participate.
5. Classical involvement
 - a. Classes are to be intentional about nominating diverse people to CRC denominational boards.
 - b. Classes shall ensure that denominational board members and representatives report back at their meetings.
 - c. Classes should utilize the database of multiethnic candidates and the resources of the Office of Race Relations to identify multiethnic candidates for board positions.
6. Synod to mandate the use of at-large positions as a tool to increase multiethnic representation on boards.
7. Board and classis level training
 - a. Hold seminars on the importance of participation on CRC denominational boards, the culture of denominational boards, how boards function, how meetings are conducted, and how to become effective board members.
 - b. At the classical level, orient delegates about issues and procedures at meetings (how to make motions, read financial statements, deal with issues).
 - c. Conduct regional workshops on board and classis meetings.

Timeline: Work should begin immediately, and a plan should be reported and reviewed annually in September by the BOT.

Role of Office of Race Relations

G. That synod affirm that the Office of Race Relations shall continue to engage collaboratively with all denominational ministries, boards, and committees to ensure that the denomination's commitment to a racism-free environment and multiethnic diversity will be strengthened and sustained. This shall include but not be limited to the following:

1. Encouraging continued dialogue, increasing mutual understanding among cultures, and building relationships with the goal of being the church of Revelation 7.
2. Providing appropriate antiracism and diversity training for all members of denominational boards and committees.
3. Affirming the fulfilment of the current mandate for the Office of Race Relations, as follows:

CRC Race Relations will initiate and provide effective and collaborative training, programs, and organizing actions in ways that mobilize Christian Reformed agencies and educational institutions, as well as classes and congregations, to recognize, expose, and dismantle racism in all its forms and to experience true biblical reconciliation as a diverse and unified people of God.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 558)

Recommendations for Implementation

H. That synod authorize the executive director to appoint a person for a special two-year term (terminal position located at the denominational offices) under the direct supervision of the executive director. This person will be responsible for the implementation of decisions of Synod 2013 in response to the DLPG II recommendations, as well as the recommendations adopted by Synod 2011.

I. That synod authorize the designation of 0.25 percent of the overall denominational budget, including Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, to fund the implementation of this work in order to ensure an overall denominational commitment to providing adequate resources. The projected budget is approximately \$500,000 annually for two years. Budgeted costs would include

- salary and benefits for the new, two-year, terminal position
- administrative support costs
- resources and materials, curriculum, training, software, and so forth
- staff development
- travel

The proposed basic elements for the job description include the following:

- Provide leadership and coordination in implementation of the strategies approved by Synod 2013 for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination.
- Work with the executive director and all ministry leaders to establish and institute methods to maintain systems to fulfill the mandate.

- Develop internship position descriptions and actively recruit multi-ethnic candidates to fill these roles.
- Develop training curricula for churches and denominational staff related to specific training and staff development recommendations.
- Assist all denominational boards in meeting the goal of a 25 percent ethnic representation in board membership.

Timeline: Recruit and hire a qualified candidate to fill this role for two years; target September 1, 2013, through August 2015.

V. Conclusion

The members of the expanded Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II trust and hope we have fulfilled our mandate and, “on the shoulders of all who have gone before us,” provided synod with wise and clear counsel that can truly bring us measurably closer to achieving the vision of a marvelously diverse and unified CRC. Therefore, we humbly submit this report for synod’s consideration.

Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II
 Joel R. Boot (*ex officio*)
 Michelle De Bie
 Bing Goei
 Emmet A. Harrison
 Stanley Jim
 Peter Kang
 Verney Kho, chair
 Daniel Mendez, reporter
 Tong Kun Park
 Sandra Williams

Appendix A

Report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (2011)

I. Introduction

This report is a response to a mandate given by Synod 2009 to the Board of Trustees (BOT):

To instruct the executive director to convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination and report to Synod 2010.

Ground: We believe the current structure of denominational leadership does not adequately address the fundamental concerns regarding advancement of people of color at all levels of congregational and denominational life.

(*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 589)

Additional reasons provided by the members of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group include the following:

- Increasing multiethnic representation in denominational leadership is our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.
- Our negative track record on this issue requires immediate attention.

II. Background

In the synodical advisory committee discussions and on the floor of synod in 2009, it was expressed that our denomination has not adequately followed biblical principles regarding multiethnic diversity, especially in light of the changing demographic in North America, and that CRC leadership in particular has not reflected this reality. As a result, the executive director was mandated the task of convening a task force that would develop a statement of vision and strategy to address this issue (*Acts of Synod 2009*, pp. 588-89).

The Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR), instituted in 1971 and later named the Office of Race Relations in 1995, has for years carried out antiracism training and raised awareness about issues of racism and diversity. However, this has not translated into a significant increase in the percentage of multiethnic leadership in the denominational offices. The percentage of people of color in positions of leadership level 14 and above is far short of the goal of 25 percent by 2011 called for in the Ministry Plan Scorecard. It is also noted that Synod 2005 made a decision encouraging “each classis to include at least one ethnic minority person in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 748). At Synod 2010, only 7 classes (15%) complied with this decision. Clearly, we as a denomination have not taken seriously enough our call to increase multiethnic leadership so as to make it a reality.

As its primary point of reference, the task force used the study committee report approved by Synod 1996, “God’s Diverse and Unified Family” (GDUF), along with two other key documents, the Report Regarding Diversity in Administrative Positions (February 2007) and the Diversity Plan developed for the Board of Trustees by the executive director (May 2007). What is especially troubling is that many good recommendations have been made; however, they unfortunately have not been followed through nor implemented. This was highlighted as an issue that the denomination has to pay particular attention to if it is serious about increasing diversity in the denomination. The task force struggled with the question of whether the present time would be any different.

A thorough process was followed—a process that included a survey for increasing multiethnic participation within the leadership structures of the CRCNA, completed by senior leadership in the denomination regarding attitudes and perceptions with respect to multiethnic leadership. The information received from the survey of the senior leadership was very insightful, and it provided a critical analysis of the landscape within the current leadership structure of the denomination. It also identified several potential barriers to multiethnic diversity at the senior leadership levels. The task force has worked through a myriad of documents, activities, and perspectives and, as a result, strongly proposes the following recommendations for the BOT.

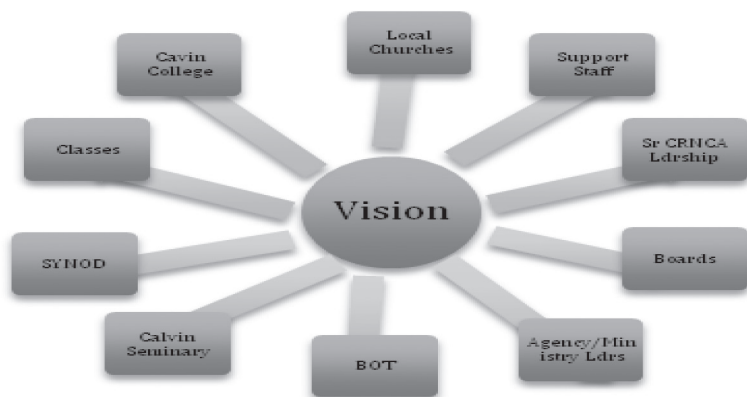
III. Recommendations

A. *Statement of vision*

1. That the BOT adopt the following Statement of Vision to address the issue of increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination:

A multiethnic, multicultural leadership that models the report approved by Synod 1996, *God's Diverse and Unified Family* (GDUF).

2. It is essential that this vision for denominational leadership have an impact on every denominational entity, as illustrated in the following (for illustrative purposes only):



B. That the BOT adopt each of the following strategies for implementing the vision. It is essential to first note that in planning and implementing these strategies everyone involved must be alert to two all-encompassing and necessary features that need to be embraced with regard to each one: (1) creating a culture of inclusion in the denominational offices and structures, and (2) assigning definite lines of accountability with clear responsibilities and timelines and with direct overall oversight by the executive director and Board of Trustees.

1. Hiring of senior leadership

- a. All future hires will be made in accordance with the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of 25 percent racial minority leaders in CRCNA positions of senior leadership (level 16 and above).
- b. Timeline – This strategy shall be implemented immediately.

2. Recruitment

- a. The director of Human Resources and the director of Race Relations will be jointly responsible to develop a comprehensive plan for the identification and recruitment of multiethnic leadership in senior denominational positions and will both be accountable for the implementation of this plan. The plan shall include the following:

- 1) Identification

- a) Identify those who have significant contacts with and in the ethnic minority communities.
- b) Establish and maintain an active pool of potential candidates.

- c) Develop and utilize a denomination-wide survey to help people recognize their potential.
- 2) Recruitment of potential candidates for leadership
 - a) Promote an environment of hospitality in the denominational offices in coordination with senior agency and ministry personnel through interagency celebrations, formation of small groups, and regular social gatherings.
 - b) Develop a contact system beyond the CRC.
 - c) Communicate the ministry opportunities and challenges—not just job requirements.
 - d) Establish funded internships.
- b. Timeline – The plan shall be developed by July 2011, with implementation to take place immediately following. Monitoring and accountability will be carried out in the annual performance evaluations of the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations after September 2011.
- 3. Equal opportunity Human Resources
 - a. The office of Human Resources will undergo a thorough assessment of all human resources (HR) policies and practices with the purpose of ensuring an equitable, transparent, and bias-free HR system with regard to job descriptions, recruitment and hiring practices, orientation and training, supervision, performance evaluations, promotions, professional development, and the like.
 - Transparent policies and practices will reduce the perception of “who you know matters more than what you know.” They will also help build a broader understanding regarding qualifications and competencies for denominational positions.
 - The dynamics between the dominant culture and minority representation must be recognized and anticipated, with an emphasis on the blessings and benefits of doing so.
 - b. Competencies, performance evaluations, and supervision policies especially need to be defined to ensure equal opportunity and promote diversity and inclusion.
 - c. This assessment will be done in consultation with the Office of Race Relations, with recommendations for changes in policies and practices to come jointly from the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations.
 - d. Timeline – To begin as soon as possible and be completed by August 2011.
- 4. Job descriptions
 - a. All job descriptions for senior positions will be reviewed and finalized by an ad hoc committee made up of the directors of Human Resources

and Race Relations, the ED or DDM, and the appropriate representative of the agency or specialized ministry involved.

It is important to realize that the job descriptions used in filling positions can contain barriers to diversity. Often such impediments are unintended and yet may limit the pool of potential candidates. Requirements such as ordination, certain levels of education, experience, and so forth may not be necessary and yet may prevent qualified candidates from applying. These obstacles need to be identified and removed.

- b. This ad hoc committee will have the authority to make any other changes or recommendations that might remove barriers to people of color.
- c. Timeline – This strategy shall be implemented immediately.

5. Senior leadership practice

- a. All senior leaders will incorporate and promote equitable diversity practices in their hiring, communication, and management processes. These practices are to be incorporated into performance objectives and appraisals of their staff. Senior leaders will also be held accountable, by way of their annual performance evaluations, of ensuring that they and their staff adhere fully to multiethnic diversity practices and promotion.

The commitment of senior leadership to diversity and equity must be a core value of the organizational practices. Its importance must be communicated throughout the organization to all staff levels in a variety of ways.

- b. The composition of regional ministry teams working at the direction of senior staff shall make every effort to further the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of 25 percent representation on all such teams, with staff held accountable as indicated above.
- c. An assessment of how these strategies are being accomplished will be carried out jointly by the directors of Race Relations and Human Resources.
- d. Timeline – The external assessment will be done and the performance evaluations of senior leadership will begin to monitor equitable diversity practices in line with this strategy after September 2011.

6. Coaching and mentoring

- a. A system of mutual mentoring for all new staff will be established in the denominational offices with a focus on multiethnic leadership, inclusion, and diversity practices. Mentors shall come from a pool of people with the necessary experience and endorsed by the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations.

The development of a culture of *mutual* mentoring is essential so that people of color are considered equal partners in the learning process. This would help dispel the false perception that they are the ones that always need mentoring.

- b. This system will be developed by the Office of Race Relations in consultation with the director of Human Resources and all senior leadership in the denomination. It will include

- 1) The assignment of a mentor (in conversation with such persons) to every new staff member.
 - 2) Mentor and mentee training opportunities and resources (retreats, conferences, courses, peer groups, and so forth).
 - c. Timeline – To begin in September 2011.
7. Professional development
- a. All senior leaders will be required to participate in a mandatory series of cross-cultural diversity education and training at least once each year, with an evaluation that will be built into their annual performance review.
 - Diversity education and training is a crucial component of creating equitable environments within organizations and of achieving diversity in leadership.
 - This will help to build and foster a culture of care, equity, and inclusiveness.
 - This shall include both internal (Office of Race Relations) and external training.
 - b. The director of Race Relations will be responsible to develop and coordinate this training.
 - c. Timeline – Implementation to begin no later than July 2011.
8. Organizational structure
- a. The director of Race Relations will be appointed as a permanent voting member on the Ministries Leadership Team (MLT) with all the rights and privileges as the other directors on the team.
 - This demonstrates that people of color are meaningfully involved in the decision-making process of the organization.
 - It also ensures that multiethnic diversity and equitable practices are given high priority, remain a core value, and are integrated into all the deliberations and planning processes of the MLT.
 - b. Timeline – To be implemented immediately.
9. Nominations for denominational leadership
- a. All search committees for senior positions will be staffed in accordance with the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of 35 percent minority membership on all such committees.
 - 1) These will include people who represent the rank and file of the church and who may not have prior involvement with or full knowledge of the agency, provided they have a passion for the CRC and the agency's ministry.
 - 2) Search committee members will receive appropriate antiracism training, and all members of search committees will sign off on the *God's Diverse and Unified Family* report.

- b. The nomination processes for agency boards and committees, specialized ministry advisory councils, and the Board of Trustees will make every effort to further the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of ensuring that a minimum of 35 percent minority representation will be submitted to each region, and a minimum of 35 percent minority representation will be on the nomination slate submitted by the Office of Synodical Services to the BOT.
 - 1) Antiracism guidelines from the GDUF report will be integrated into the request for nominations. Classes will also be asked to review these guidelines before approving nominations and sending them to the Office of Synodical Services.
 - 2) All members of boards and committees of the denomination will receive appropriate antiracism training, and all members of boards and committees will sign off on the GDUF report.
- c. Timeline – This strategy shall be implemented by June 2012.

C. That the BOT appoint a task force that includes as many members of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group as possible to (1) develop a statement of vision and strategy that encourages local congregations and regions to reflect the communities within which they find themselves, to (2) revisit the mandate and mission of the Office of Race Relations and the Race Relations Advisory Council, and to (3) assign this group the following mandate:

To make recommendations that reaffirm and expand the mission and mandate of both the Office of Race Relations and the Race Relations Advisory Council in line with the strategies adopted, providing added accountability, empowering the Office of Race Relations to engage collaboratively with all denominational agencies, boards, and councils, and ensuring that the denominational commitment to ethnic diversity will be strengthened and move forward. The contribution of the Office of Race Relations is indispensable and will have an impact on the denominational system as a whole.

From our discussions and recommendations it is evident that the mandate and mission of both the Office of Race Relations and the Race Relations Advisory Council must be revisited, in light of the compelling need the denomination faces to ensure justice and accountability, and in light of the ever-increasing ethnic diversity in society and the denomination.

Diversity in Leadership Planning Group
Michelle De Bie
Gerard L. Dykstra
Bing Goei
Emmett Harrison
Sheila Holmes
Estepan Lugo
Mike Van Hofwegen, reporter
Sandra Williams, chair

Appendix B

Synod 2011 Minutes Addressing the Report of Diversity in Leadership Planning Group I

(Acts of Synod 2011, pp. 858-61, 866-68)

Report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report (Sections II, A, 1-17, including Appendices A-D), pp. 23-33, 39-65
2. Board of Trustees Supplement (sections I, A-H, J-M, O-P, including Appendix A)
3. Board of Trustees Supplement—Ratification of the Interim Executive Director
4. Overtures 28-30, Communications 7 and 9, Supplemental reports

B. Privilege of the floor: Rev. Mark D. Vermaire, chair of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Joel R. Boot, interim executive director; and members of the executive staff

C. Background

The report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (DLPG), adopted by the BOT in February 2011, is being presented to Synod 2011 as a result of Synod 2009's instruction to have the executive director "convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination and report to Synod 2010" (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 589) and Synod 2010's decision to "express its deep disappointment at not receiving a report from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group mandated by Synod 2009 to report to [Synod 2010]" (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 884).

The advisory committee has heard from members of both the Board of Trustees and the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group, while also taking into account the related overtures and communications. We are grateful to the DLPG members for their passion and commitment evident in the heart of this report and for the boldness with which it seeks to move the CRCNA toward achieving some of its stated goals with respect to racial diversity. While a target of 25 percent multiethnic leadership in its senior-level positions seems lofty to attain, we were informed that the CRC is just four hires away from meeting this goal.

We applaud the DLPG for its effort in producing this report, given the time sensitivities it was facing. At the same time, we recognize that churches, agencies, and other affected groups have not had sufficient time to review this material in great detail prior to Synod 2011.

The intent of the following recommendations is to proceed with the report's intentionality and immediacy where possible, and to pause with careful reconsideration where necessary.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod affirm the direction of the report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group with respect to increasing multiethnic representation in the senior-level positions of the CRCNA.

—Adopted

2. That synod adopt the following statement of vision to address the issue of increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination:

To reflect a multiethnic, multicultural leadership that models the report approved by Synod 1996, *God's Diverse and Unified Family* (GDUF).

It is essential that this vision for denominational leadership have an impact on every denominational entity, as illustrated on page 57 of the *Agenda for Synod 2011*.

—Adopted

Report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group [cont.]

Recommendations

That synod adopt the following recommendations from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group report:

Hiring of Senior Leadership

1. That all future hires be made in accordance with the CRCNA's current ministry plan scorecard diversity objectives with its goal of 25 percent racial minority leaders in CRCNA positions of senior leadership (level 16 and above).

Timeline: To be implemented immediately.

Ground: This gives intentionality to the already existing denominational scorecard objective.

—Adopted

Senior Leadership Practice

2. That all senior leaders incorporate equitable diversity practices in their employee hiring, training, communication, and management processes. These diversity practices are to be jointly developed and owned by senior leaders in consultation with the Office of Race Relations and clearly articulated so that every senior leader knows exactly what diversity practices are expected. Senior leaders are to be held accountable by way of their annual performance evaluations for using these jointly-owned diversity practices. The commitment of senior leadership to diversity and equity must be a core value of the organizational practices. Its importance must be communicated throughout the organization to all staff levels in a variety of ways.

—Adopted

Coaching and Mentoring

3. That all new hires, regardless of level or ethnicity, be engaged in a mentoring system that includes corporate and cultural competencies conducive to mutual learning and appreciation. Mentors shall come from a pool of people with the necessary experience and assigned by the Human Resources office. Synod instructs the Board of Trustees (perhaps with the assistance of the offices of Human Resources and Race Relations and in consultation with the Ministries Leadership Team) to develop this system.
 - The assignment of a mentor (in conversation with such persons) to every new staff member.
 - Mentor and mentee training opportunities and resources (retreats, conferences, courses, peer groups, and others as deemed appropriate).

Timeline: To begin in December 2011.

Grounds:

- a. This will assist all new staff, regardless of ethnicity, to be more effectively incorporated into the workplace.
- b. This approach has proven to increase the rate of retention.
- c. The development and implementation of the mentoring system is a personnel matter; input from the Office of Race Relations can be helpful as it relates to cross-cultural mentoring.

—Adopted

Report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group [cont.]

Recommendations

That synod adopt the following recommendations from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group report:

Professional Development

1. That all senior leaders, present and future, be encouraged to participate in a series of cross-cultural diversity education and training experiences at least once each year, with an evaluation that will be built into their annual performance review. The professional development shall include both internal (Office of Race Relations) and external training in a variety of forms and content that emphasizes historical context with a focus on developing inclusion and unity in Christ. The director of Race Relations will be responsible to develop and coordinate this training, in consultation with the Human Resources office.

Timeline: Implementation to begin no later than July 2011.

Grounds:

- a. Diversity education and training are crucial components of creating equitable environments within organizations and of achieving diversity in leadership.
- b. This will help to build and foster a culture of care, equity, and inclusiveness.

—Adopted

Nominations for Denominational Leadership

2. That search committees for senior positions include at least two members from different ethnic minorities in their membership.
 - a. Search committees shall include people who represent the rank and file of the church and who have a passion for the CRC and the agency's mission.
 - b. Search committee members will receive appropriate antiracism training, and all members of search committees will state their agreement with the *God's Diverse and Unified Family* report.

Grounds:

- a. This gives a voice to ethnic minorities prior to the hiring of senior leaders.
- b. Search committees will benefit from a diverse membership that can identify a diverse pool of potential candidates.
- c. Having at least two members representing differing ethnic minorities is intended to minimize potential feelings of isolation and intimidation of those members.

—Adopted

3. That synod instruct the BOT to appoint an expanded task force by August 31, 2011, that includes an ethnically and geographically diverse membership, with the following broader mandate, and that the director of Race Relations will serve in an advisory role as requested by the task force:

To develop further short-term and long-term strategies for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination and report through the BOT to Synod 2013.

Grounds:

- a. An expanded task force brings additional voices from various backgrounds to the table.
- b. This expanded mandate will allow the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group to address a multi-pronged approach to increasing multiethnic leadership in the denomination.
- c. This will allow for input from a broader range of stakeholders.

—Adopted

4. That synod recommit non-adopted recommendations from the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group report (B, 2, 3, 4, 5-b, -c, -d, 9-b, -c) to the newly expanded Diversity in Leadership Planning Group for information and revision by September 30, 2012, specifically addressing the following concerns:
 - a. The role of the Office of Race Relations.
 - b. The addition of measurable goals.
 - c. The inclusion of strategies that focus on raising up, mentoring, and providing experience to diverse leaders at all levels and that foster a multiethnic leadership development plan in local congregations, classes, regional networks, and denominational offices.

Grounds:

- a. These recommendations, while helpful, need further development.
- b. This timeframe will provide adequate opportunity for the group to do this important work.

Note: Recommendation 8 from the original report (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 60) has been implemented by the Board of Trustees.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod commend the revised report to churches, agencies, and other appropriate groups by November 2012 for consideration.

Ground: This will provide adequate time for the churches, agencies, and other affected groups to respond before the report is presented to Synod 2013.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod express gratitude to the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group for its work.

—*Adopted*

7. That this be synod's response to Overtures 28-30, Communications 7 and 9, as well as to the Back to God Ministries International Supplemental Report.

—*Adopted*

As the Faith Formation Committee comes to the conclusion of its work, we are grateful to God for the privilege of working together with so many people throughout the CRCNA to strengthen intergenerational faith formation practices, in both public worship and in every facet of congregational life. We have a renewed sense of the holy urgency of this work. We also have a positive sense of opportunity regarding the innovative ways we can work together as a denomination to encourage each other in this important dimension of discipleship.

As our work nears completion, we desire to take note and pay tribute to two members of our committee who served faithfully with us but were unexpectedly taken to glory during their terms of service. Rev. Andrew Chun passed away of a sudden heart attack in 2009. Mrs. Irene Bakker passed away in 2012 after battling cancer. We value their service and give thanks for their testimonies and contributions.

I. Brief summary of our work

A. Synodical mandates

We were appointed in 2007 in the midst of synod's consideration of the possibility of admitting baptized children to the Lord's Supper. While Synod 2006 had proposed changing the Church Order to allow for the admission of baptized children to the Lord's Supper, Synod 2007 chose not to ratify that decision and instead appointed a Faith Formation Committee. The original mandate given to us was

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)

Synod also added another mandate to our work:

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).

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)

B. Denominational shepherding

During the past six years, the committee has tried to be faithful to synod's charge to shepherd a conversation within the CRCNA on matters of faith formation. As with prior synodical study committees, we have engaged in significant study of biblical and theological themes, and we have presented several documents to guide synodical discussions. We have also engaged in many learning conversations, both formal and informal. This has involved

- working with some fifty pastoral correspondents.
- meeting face-to-face with over two-thirds of all CRC classes.

- consulting with many agency and denominational representatives.
- participating in over twenty-five conferences and workshops throughout the denomination.
- corresponding with many church leaders.
- participating in discussions with the delegates to synod in each of the past five years.

These conversations sharpened our thinking, deepened our prayers, and, at various points, changed our mind about the best way forward. We have repeatedly discovered great commitment to faithful discipleship and innovative approaches in ways that discipleship can be strengthened. We have been grateful for positive responses to this approach at prior synods, in classes, and in a variety of other contexts.

As our work nears completion, we want to affirm synod's wisdom in appointing us as a *shepherding* committee rather than a *study* committee. We believe that this approach has been fruitful, and we encourage its future use whenever it may be appropriate.

C. *Formal synodical action*

These learning conversations also shaped our recommendations to Synods 2010, 2011, and 2012. Synod 2010 offered the key formative decision on children at the Lord's Supper, which shaped much of the rest of our work. Synod decided that

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to "examine themselves," to "discern the body," to "proclaim the Lord's death," to "wait for others") in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

The following statements clarify the guiding principle above:

- A formal public Profession of Faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is not required by Scripture or the confessions.
- A formal public Profession of Faith is a vital practice for faith formation and is one pastoral approach to consider prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.
- Professing faith regularly in and outside of corporate worship is a natural practice for lifelong faith formation which the church should encourage, enhance, and express.

Grounds:

- This position honors the covenant status of all who are baptized and affirms their membership in the church.
- This position is faithful to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11, which calls for a response of obedience on the part of those who come to the table.
- This position acknowledges that, though members of the body of Christ respond to the promises of God in ways that are shaped by their age and abilities, their responses are nevertheless valid responses.
- This position implements the instructions of Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81, that those who come to the table must be repentant, trusting, and desirous of growth in obedience.
- This position honors the polity of the CRC, in which the sacraments of the church are to be celebrated under the supervision of the elders.
- This position allows for diversity of local practice within a standard principle.

- g. Adopting this principle will give the Faith Formation Committee sufficient guidance to continue to carry out its mandate by proposing Church Order changes and working with church agencies to develop pastoral resources for congregations.

(*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 810-11)

In 2011 synod ratified this decision by approving the necessary changes in the Church Order and Its Supplements to reflect this position (see *Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 829-30; also *Agenda for Synod 2011*, pp. 572-76).

In response to synod's instruction to study the matter of members requesting infant dedication instead of infant baptism, our committee recommended and Synod 2012 adopted the following recommendation:

When parents request infant or child dedication, the pastor and elders of local congregations should (1) engage in pastorally appropriate ways to celebrate the birth or adoption of the child, pray for the child and parents, and call for the commitment of the parents to nurture their children in the Lord; (2) engage in convicted and winsome teaching on the subject of infant baptism; and (3) refrain from leading rituals of infant or child dedication.

Grounds:

- a. Congregations should minister to those who will not present their children for infant baptism with a spirit of gratitude to God for the gift of these children, offering encouragement and accountability to parents as part of faithful, pastoral ministry.
- b. A faithful, encouraging, pastoral response to parents promises to reduce unhelpful ambivalence toward members who do not affirm infant baptism.
- c. Many people do not embrace infant baptism because they do not understand how it is consistent with Scripture. Teaching on the subject offers a rich opportunity to promote greater biblical understanding and may lead the parents to present their children for baptism.
- d. A ritual of infant or children dedication is not required by the Bible and is not consistent with the Reformed confessions.
- e. A ritual of infant or children dedication could easily create confusion about the meaning and purpose of the sacrament of baptism.
- f. This principle is consistent with the Reformed confessions and with the past decisions of Synods 1888, 1964, 1973, 2007, and 2011.

(*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 774-75)

We are grateful for the nearly unanimous nature of each vote on these recommendations at the past three synods.

II. Resources and follow-up discussions

In the light of Synod 2011's decision to welcome covenant children to the Lord's Supper, the committee has revamped its website (www.crcna.org/faihfformation) to make it more user-friendly to congregational leaders and parents looking for resources. Many visit the site for resources that focus on new ways of studying and practicing the sacraments of baptism and communion, as well as for reflecting on what synod's decision means for the important faith milestone of profession of faith.

A. Following are some key resources developed by the committee and offered to churches for study and consideration:

- *Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith*
- *Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith: Sermon/Worship Series Suggestions*
- *Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith: A Study Guide for Small Groups*

- *Infant Dedication and the Christian Reformed Church*
- *Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper*
- *A Practice of Christian Unity: A Small Group Study of 1 Corinthians 11*

B. Faith Alive Christian Resources also has developed a number of resources that directly relate to the committee's work. We are grateful for our partnership with Faith Alive and for their proactive and creative work in developing these materials.

1. We recommend the following to the churches:

- *A Place at the Table: Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper*
- *You're Invited: A Week of Family Devotions on the Lord's Supper*, offering a week-long set of devotions for use by families the week prior to celebrating communion
- *Taste and See: Preparing Children to Participate in the Lord's Supper*, a two-session course featuring lessons on each sacrament and designed for intergenerational learning

2. We take note of several other fine resources that Faith Alive has developed on topics related to our work (see www.faithaliveresources.org for these and other titles):

- *Home Grown Handbook for Christian Parenting*
- *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith: A Guide for Churches*
- Nurture blog (www.NurtureKidsFaith.org)
- *I Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith*
- *Quest of Faith: Understanding What You Confess*
- *Shaped by God: Twelve Essentials for Nurturing Faith in Children, Youth, and Adults*
- *We*, an intergenerational faith nurture curriculum for gathering the whole church around the whole story of God (www.wecurriculum.org)
- Recent articles in *Reformed Worship* and *The Banner*

3. In addition, other CRC-related resources are available at the following websites:

- The Back to God Hour (<http://backtogod.net/global-ministries/english>)
- CRC Home Missions (www.crcna.org/pages/crhm_smallgroups.cfm)
- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (www.calvin.edu/worship)
- Christian Schools International, especially the CSI "nurturing faith" blog (www.csionline.org/resources/community/nurturing_faith_blog and/or nurturingfaith.wordpress.com)
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (www.calvinistcadets.org; www.gemsgc.org; www.youthunlimited.org)
- The Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary (<http://cep.calvinseminary.edu>)

- Calvin Theological Seminary publications, such as *The Forum* (www.calvinseminary.edu/pubs/forum)
 - The CRC Year of Faith Formation (resources available at www.crcna.org/pages/fa_walkon_resources.cfm)
4. In addition to these resources, we have discerned three areas in which our committee could serve the denomination:

a. A Primer for Welcoming Children to the Lord’s Supper and the Role of Public Profession of Faith

We have heard several requests for a brief document that orients congregations who are just beginning to explore welcoming children to the Lord’s Supper. To help make congregations familiar with the denominational discussion of this matter, we have prepared a brief primer in question and answer format (see Appendix A).

b. Profession of Faith: A Guide for Council Discussions

We have heard several requests for a brief document to guide discussions about ways of strengthening profession of faith as a faith milestone (see Appendix B).

c. Profession of Faith Form

Synod 2012 adopted the following recommendation:

That synod request congregations to assess the forms for baptism and profession of faith as found in Appendix B and respond to the Faith Formation Committee about the advisability of presenting them to Synod 2013 for approval as “synodically approved forms.”

Grounds:

- a. These forms are consistent with scriptural teaching about the sacraments and with the Reformed confessions.
- b. The attached forms strengthen our existing set of explicitly approved forms by, for example, providing ways of linking the profession of faith before the elders and the public profession of faith and by providing a model for how to celebrate profession of faith and baptism in the same service.
- c. Strengthening the pool of explicitly approved synodical forms is valuable both for congregations that only use the exact text of approved forms and those that more freely adapt them.
- d. Any synodical action on proposed liturgical forms should happen only after the churches have had sufficient time to review them.
- e. Approving these forms developed by the RCA would further strengthen organic unity and collaboration with our sister denomination.

(Acts of Synod 2012, p. 772)

III. Continued faith formation ministry

A. *Added mandate*

By 2011, in the midst of our work, two things had become apparent: (1) that the matter of faith formation would need to receive continued attention for years to come in order that the churches may be assisted and encouraged in their ministries, and (2) that our current denominational structure has no denomination-wide mechanism through which the efforts such as

those of our committee can be continued. With that realization, Synod 2011 added one more year to our life and gave us the added mandate:

That synod extend the term of the Faith Formation Committee for one more year with the following additional mandate:

1. To identify appropriate models for developing a denomination-wide mechanism for promoting continued learning, reflection, and training on the topic of faith formation and discipleship. This is to be done in consultation with other denominational ministries and related agencies.
2. Provide quarterly reports on this work throughout 2011 and 2012 to the interim executive director, with a final report to Synod 2013.

Grounds:

- a. Faithful discipleship and faith formation are urgent and ongoing concerns for our churches.
- b. While the Faith Formation Committee will complete its original mandate at the meeting of Synod 2012, the tasks of training, learning, and mutual accountability are ongoing.
- c. The work of the Faith Formation Committee in shepherding the denomination in this topic has raised awareness of the hunger for resources and leadership to support faith formation at the classical and local levels. This movement toward stronger faith formation practices needs to be supported and encouraged.
- d. While there are denominational ministries and other related agencies that support faith formation, there is currently no agency or office mandated to coordinate or oversee matters of faith formation.

(Acts of Synod 2011, p. 832)

Synod 2011 also added this matter about the formation of a denominational Worship Committee, recommended to synod in the Faith Alive report:

That synod refer the tasks listed below (as presented for a proposed CRC Worship Committee—see *Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 177) to the Faith Formation Committee for information and urge the committee to consider how these tasks might be fulfilled.

- a. Writing, updating, and e-publishing a variety of liturgies, prayers, and forms that can be used in worship and on other occasions (e.g., forms for sacraments, ordination, weddings, and so forth).
- b. Providing leadership in worship by offering guidelines and principles for worship in the churches.
- c. Overseeing a denominational worship website that would include suggestions for worship specifically related to the CRC (seasonal liturgies, sacramental liturgies, prayers, litanies, music resources, advice on worship planning, links to helpful articles, and other resources). This website would complement the work of the websites of Reformed Worship, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, and the Network.
- d. Coordinating the worship resources of all the agencies, thus using expertise wisely and saving resources.
- e. Providing a place for churches to contact with questions about and resources for worship.
- f. Maintaining ecumenical contacts related to worship (in consultation with the CRC Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee), especially with other Reformed bodies.

Grounds:

- 1) The CRC needs to provide better leadership and resources for the churches in the crucial area of worship.

- 2) While worship is central to church life and mission, there is no designated agency or office to support that ministry in the CRC.
- 3) While the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship can certainly be an important partner in this endeavor, it cannot devote its resources exclusively to the CRC, as it is funded as an ecumenical institute.

(*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 855)

Since that time we have engaged in many conversations with the Faith Alive agency, the executive director, and the synodical Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture. These conversations have been cordial, fruitful, and rewarding in several key areas.

B. Convictions

As part of these discussions, the committee has developed a brief set of convictions to guide work in this area, based on themes we have discussed throughout the CRCNA for the past five years.

Faith formation is part of the “making new of all things” by the Father, Son, and Spirit. Faith formation takes persons as they are and participates in God’s work of bringing to completion the good work he has begun. Thus, faith formation is missional through and through.

1. Faith formation situates the narratives of persons and communities within the grand narrative of God’s making all things new. Thus, faith formation requires growing in sturdy biblical literacy.
2. Faith formation is a work of covenantal partnership: God “works in” as we “work out.”
3. Faith formation is both corporate and personal—these two dimensions synergize with each other. The family is a central location of faith formation. Corporate faith formation is always intergenerational.
4. Faith formation is lifelong; at different stages of one’s life it takes on different characteristics.
5. Faith formation is holistic, involving every dimension of our humanness. Though these dimensions cannot be described in totality, they do include our intellect, emotions, actions/service, past/memories, future/dreams and goals, relationships, and worldview.
6. Faith formation is disciplined—that is, it involves a web of dozens of “spiritual” disciplines that are learned and practiced both personally and communally. Corporate worship (as it weaves together preaching, the sacraments, singing, prayer, and so forth) functions as a central, orienting discipline for this web of disciplines.

Faith formation is both a mystery that cannot be explained or quantified or made into a formula, and a reality that bears tangible fruit.

C. Programmatic criteria

The committee has also developed a set of programmatic criteria that can guide us in discerning the most fruitful way forward. Future denominational work in the area of faith formation should

- feature regular listening to congregations, connecting congregations with similar needs and opportunities, and identifying best practices, potential leaders, and local wisdom that can benefit the whole church.
- articulate winsome, countercultural, visionary models for faith formation ministries.
- foster vital integration of worship, sacraments, faith formation, and mission in local congregations.
- develop vibrant discipleship across generations, including intergenerational milestones.
- feature an obvious passion for young adults and the development of meaningful ministry with them, by them, and to them.
- provide a central contact point for resources, questions, and assistance on faith formation ministry.
- facilitate cross-agency collaboration on faith formation ministries.

D. Opportunities and challenges

1. We have taken note of many unique opportunities and strengths of ministry in this area today.
 - Many local leaders have developed excellent materials for their own congregation.
 - Many resources are available for free online.
 - Social media aids in communicating best practices.
 - Churches are hungry for materials, insights, inspiration, and models.
 - Good cross-denominational learning is taking place.
 - There are a number of highly motivated youth and young adults with many gifts who are eager to contribute to the life of the church more broadly.
2. We also take note of challenges we face in this area.
 - There are financial challenges that impede the development of customizable resources for a wide range of congregations.
 - This is a period of significant change in the nature of denominational programs in a wide variety of denominations.
 - The profusion of online resources creates a discernment challenge—great quantity often makes it more difficult to find the very best materials.
 - Congregational patterns of staffing and programming vary widely.
 - Several agencies and entities work on topics related to faith formation, but with relatively little communication or coordination.
 - We live in a time of significant change and of a perceived need for constant innovation.

Any work we take up in the area of faith formation needs to coordinate with the ongoing work of several dynamic entities—the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture, CRC missions, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Dynamic Youth Ministries, the Young Adult Leadership Taskforce, among others.

E. Organizational structures

In light of these criteria, challenges, and opportunities, we have been exploring the pros and cons of a broad range of organizational options, such as

- a regional network of faith formation catalysts.
- a task force designated to continue work in this area.
- a new office to focus on faith formation.
- a restructuring, reconstitution, or merger of existing agencies that would create new capacity for work in this area.
- a grant-funded or donor-funded institute or center for catalytic work in this area.

We have communicated regularly with the executive director's office and the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture. We are grateful for a widespread convergence of views about this overall vision and for a variety of creative conversations about making this vision operational in both the short term and long term.

As of the writing of this report, these discussions continue to unfold. We anticipate presenting our final reflections on these models in a supplement to this report to synod, which we will process through the Board of Trustees at its May meeting.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. John D. Witvliet, chair; Dr. Howard Vanderwell, secretary; and other members of the committee who may be present when the work of the Faith Formation Committee is being discussed.

B. That synod encourage congregations to make use of the following resources:

- A Primer for Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper and the Role of Public Profession of Faith (Appendix A)
- Strengthening Profession of Faith: A Guide for Councils (Appendix B)
- New products developed by Faith Alive related to our work:
 - *A Place at the Table: Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper*
 - *You're Invited: A Week of Family Devotions on the Lord's Supper* for use by families the week prior to celebrating communion
 - *Taste and See: Preparing Children to Participate in the Lord's Supper*, a two-session course featuring lessons on each sacrament and designed for intergenerational learning

C. That synod approve the forms for baptism and profession of faith as found in Appendix C.

Grounds:

1. These forms are consistent with scriptural teaching about the sacraments and with the Reformed confessions.
2. These forms strengthen our existing set of explicitly approved forms by, for example, providing ways of linking the profession of faith before the elders and the public profession of faith and by providing

a model for celebrating profession of faith and baptism in the same service.

3. Strengthening the pool of explicitly approved synodical forms is valuable both for congregations that use only the exact text of approved forms and congregations that more freely adapt them.
4. Approving these forms developed by the Reformed Church in America further strengthens organic unity and collaboration with our sister denomination.

D. That synod accept our committee's work as fulfilling each of the various mandates assigned to the Faith Formation Committee by Synods 2007 and 2011.

Note: A final recommendation on denominational faith formation structures may be included in the Faith Formation Committee supplemental report.

V. Conclusion

As we conclude our work, the committee is moved both by the deep desire we have recognized throughout the denomination to practice the sacraments in ways that overflow with the grace of our Lord, and by the great love our church has for its children, teens, and young adults, along with its commitment to intergenerational learning and growth. Covenantal faithfulness is not a dry doctrine for us, but an ethos that communities long to embody.

Finally, the conversations we have had with so many leaders in our denomination have revealed a strong passion for the welfare of the church, the growth in faith of our children and youth, and a vibrant intentionality in ministry. We are grateful that synod added to our mandate the task of making recommendations concerning how faith formation work might continue after our work was done. We are grateful for the vision and desire that we saw growing in all corners of the CRC to cultivate strong, intergenerational congregations and to be equipped with sturdy and wise guidance on the way toward embodying this vision. As we step down, we are eager to see how the work will continue.

Faith Formation Committee

Joel R. Boot, *ex officio*

Peter Choi

Jill Friend

Syd Hielema

Pat Nederveld

H. David Schuringa

Howard Vanderwell, secretary

John D. Witvliet, chair

Appendix A

A Primer for Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper and the Role of Public Profession of Faith

1. Are churches required to make any changes regarding who comes to the Lord's Supper or their procedure for administering this sacrament?

No. Synod determined that your elders have continued oversight about who comes to the Lord's Supper and how that takes place (Titus 1:5). You are not required to change anything. However, we hope that every congregation will consider something that many have found to be a great blessing in the church.

2. What has changed with respect to the denomination's position?

Synod decided that, because a baptized member already enjoys membership in the covenant (Acts 2:39), the formal public profession of faith is no longer a prerequisite for his or her admittance to communion. In the past, the formal public profession of faith was the "gateway" to receiving the Lord's Supper. Synod decided that the formal public profession of faith is now the gateway to confessing membership.

3. Who, with the permission of the elders, may come to the Lord's Supper?

All baptized members of the church may come to the Lord's Supper without having made the formal public profession of faith (Luke 18:16).

4. Doesn't this violate the fencing of the table in accordance with 1 Corinthians 11 and our confessions?

Synod's decision indicates that we have unnecessarily read "covenant children" into these passages. We do not want to include our covenant children among the ranks of unbelievers, the unrepentant, and the wicked listed there who could not with integrity come to the Lord's table without faith in Christ (Ps. 22:9-10; 71:6).

5. Since the participation of covenant children no longer requires the formal public profession of faith, may any child come to the table, or is an expression of faith still necessary?

Baptized members should express an age- and ability-appropriate love for Jesus prior to coming to the table (Luke 22:19).

6. How and when does this happen for the first time in a child's life?

This milestone event should occur in a manner deemed appropriate by the supervising elders of the church.

7. Can you provide some examples?

Here are three possible models:

- a. Parental model: Parents discuss with the child the meaning of the Lord's Supper (Deut. 6:4-9). When convinced that the child loves the Lord and is ready to participate in a manner appropriate to age and ability, the parents may be asked to inform their district elder or pastor that their child will be participating at the next communion.
- b. Elder model: The parents and the child meet informally with an elder or two to have the aforementioned discussion with the child and

mutually come to a decision regarding the child's age- and ability-appropriate readiness for participation.

- c. Group welcome model: The elders decide that all children are invited to come to the table at a particular age (e.g., first grade). This invitation can include a special class or classes explaining the meaning of the Lord's Supper and encouraging an age- and ability-appropriate expression of faith, as well as a public welcoming ceremony of the group on a special Sunday each year (e.g., Easter).

Also, keep in mind that every Lord's Supper includes a call to faith in Jesus Christ as a condition for participation.

8. What is confessing membership?

Confessing membership requires an interview with the elders and a public ceremony during worship in which a candidate makes a personal commitment to the creeds and confessions of the church. Confessing members pledge to support the church with prayers and gifts, and they become eligible to vote in congregational meetings and to be considered for leadership positions.

9. When should the youth make the formal public profession of faith to become confessing members?

As in the past, we anticipate that most of our youth can be prepared for this in Sunday school and catechism classes by the time they are sixteen to eighteen years old. Prior to the milestone event, we recommend a profession of faith class lasting two to four weeks to explain confessing membership.

10. In our church, young people are making professions of faith during the middle school years. Must we discontinue that practice?

Not necessarily. The age for profession of faith tended to decrease when it was the gateway to the table because the church sensed that it was appropriate for covenant children to take communion. Now that public profession of faith is the gateway to confessing membership, we anticipate that this event will naturally occur toward the end of high school, as was customary in the past. But how this happens, and if it does, will be determined by each congregation. If formal public professions continue to take place in the middle school years, the elders may want to consider postponing some responsibilities and privileges of confessing membership until a later age (e.g., sixteen or eighteen).

11. Won't young people stop making professions of faith since they can come to the table without it?

We are not aware that this has happened. In fact, public professions of faith should increase since the Lord's Supper is a "means of grace" given by Christ to strengthen the faith of his people (1 Cor. 10:16-17). We believe our children and youth need this faith-forming means of grace more than ever.

12. But what do we do if, God forbid, a baptized member refuses to become a confessing member in due time?

This possibility has always existed, and our Church Order outlines a pastoral response for such circumstances. The desire to avoid this

scenario is another reason we encourage faith formation through the Word and sacraments from a young age.

13. Our covenant darlings can be quite rambunctious. Won't their presence lead to a more chaotic Holy Communion?

This consideration could play a role in determining a particular child's readiness. However, there has been no reported chaos at the Lord's table—only covenant blessedness for the whole family (Matt. 26:27-28).

14. This all seems so new to us. How can we feel more comfortable about implementing this change?

We advise that you visit at least one Christian Reformed Church where children participate in communion in order to observe the sacrament there. Also discuss with them their experience. With that information, you will be better equipped to formulate a practice that suits your congregation's unique situation (Rev. 2:7).

15. Won't disunity result in the churches if some congregations welcome children to the Lord's Supper and others do not?

The Christian Reformed Church, united by our confessions, offers a diversity of congregations, worship styles, and programs, all within biblical limits. Welcoming covenant children to the Lord's Supper may be one of many considerations as you prayerfully decide which Christian Reformed Church is best for the faith formation of you and your family (Eph. 4:1-7).

Helps

Leunk, Thea Nyhoff. *A Place at the Table* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2012). A three-session video-based small group study for churches on welcoming children to the Lord's Supper.

Bouwers, John, et al. *You're Invited: A Week of Family Devotions on the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2012).

For parents who want to start a conversation with their children about the Lord's Supper:

At www.crcna.org, click on "Faith Formation" for numerous resources regarding the CRCNA's positions, baptism, children at the Lord's table, a study on 1 Corinthians 11, handling objections to infant baptism, public profession of faith, and much more.

Appendix B

Strengthening Profession of Faith: A Guide for Councils

One recurring theme in our conversations throughout the CRCNA has been a strong desire—which we affirm—to see the practice of profession of faith thrive in our churches as a significant milestone event. These conversations arise out of a deep desire to love the youth of our congregations and to search for ways to include, embrace, and enfold them more deeply into the life of the church. These conversations also point to a set of practices that churches have been using to strengthen this practice. We provide this brief summary here as a guide for church council conversations.

1. **Proactive encouragement.** Instead of waiting for young members to take the initiative, many congregational leaders are taking the initiative to come alongside their youth and actively encourage them to think about taking this important step, respecting and affirming the unique story of each person's journey with faith.

Question: What are we doing to proactively encourage profession of faith?

2. **Time frame.** Instead of waiting until young people are about ready to graduate from high school—and often leave the congregation for college or work—congregations are discovering the value of encouraging a profession of faith milestone at age 14, 15, or 16. This time frame leaves a year or two before high school graduation in which they may put into practice in the congregation the learning and growth that are part of their journey toward profession of faith. This time frame also challenges congregations to provide significant ministry opportunities for young people.

Question: How might we encourage younger high school youth to publicly profess their faith? What opportunities can we provide for them to engage in ministries of this congregation in ways that correspond with the gifts God has given them?

3. **Rigorous and relevant training.** Preparation for profession of faith has usually included systematic biblical study as well as a study of church history and the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. In the strongest and most vital congregations we sense a growing, not weakening enthusiasm for this kind of training, as well as for instruction in spiritual disciplines and for encouraging lifelong habits of prayer, Bible reading, and worship. We also see creativity in how this is provided, including training in retreat or camp settings and linking learning with opportunities for service and participation in several aspects of congregation life.

Question: How might we strengthen the rigor and relevance of the holistic formative growth opportunities we provide?

4. **Family involvement.** In many vital congregations, we see renewed attention to encourage parents and entire families to be involved in faith formation activities. Faith Alive Christian Resources' recent innovative work on an intergenerational curriculum and materials for parents can strongly assist this approach. (See www.WeCurriculum.org.)

Question: How can we encourage and equip families to be engaged in faith formation?

5. **Mentoring.** We have heard from many congregations that use mentoring as a way to prepare youth for making profession of faith. Matching individual teens with mature Christian adults who pray for them and come alongside them during their preparation for professing their faith (and beyond!) can be a life-changing experience for both mentor and mentee.

Question: How can we encourage each other through mentoring relationships?

6. **Meeting the elders.** We are grateful for creative ways in which congregations have made meetings between those professing their faith and the

elders a deep and meaningful experience. Some congregations encourage those making profession of faith to prepare a letter or song that expresses their faith. Some shape the conversation with the elders in ways that mirror the public celebration of profession of faith.

Question: How can we shape profession of faith conversations with elders to be a significant time of spiritual encouragement?

- 7. Liturgical celebration.** Congregations are working to make the ceremony of profession of faith a significant and meaningful liturgical moment in the life of the congregation. To mark this significant milestone in the lives of young people, some churches present them with a handmade memento or even a scrapbook or portfolio detailing their faith journeys to that particular point. Others look for ways of including those making profession of faith in shaping or leading part of the service, perhaps by reading Scripture, sharing a testimony or song, or choosing music or artwork that will be used in worship.

Question: How we can shape public professions of faith to be a time of significant celebration and gratitude to God?

- 8. Ongoing discipleship.** Some congregations are becoming more intentional about what happens after profession of faith, whether through a class, quarterly follow-up meal, or “internship” with one or more congregational ministries. This helps to challenge the idea—still persistent in some places—that profession of faith is a kind of “graduation” exercise.

Question: How we do show that profession of faith is not the end of a process but a milestone along the way? What explicit plans can we put in place for intentional follow-up after profession of faith?

Appendix C

Forms for Baptism and Profession of Faith

The following forms are closely based on those recently approved for use in the Reformed Church in America. Based on feedback solicited by Synod 2012, we have added explanatory footnotes that specify that “the faith of the church” refers to the “the faith of the church as taught in the creeds and confessions of this church.”

ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

PREPARATION

The minister addresses the congregation:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father

and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit,

and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
Matthew 28:18-20

The minister continues, using one or more of the following:

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:
There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is above all and through all and in all.
Ephesians 4:4-6

Or

As many of you as were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.
There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3:27-28

Or

Do you not know
that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?
Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,
so we too might walk in newness of life.
Romans 6:3-4

Or

But to all who received him,
who believed in his name,
he gave power to become children of God,
who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh
or of the will of man, but of God.
John 1:12-13

Or

I will establish my covenant between me and you,
and your offspring after you throughout their generations,
for an everlasting covenant,
to be God to you and to your offspring after you.
Genesis 17:7

Or

And if you belong to Christ,
then you are Abraham's offspring,

heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29

Or

For the promise is for you, for your children,
and for all who are far away,
everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

Acts 2:39

The minister continues:

Baptism is the sign and seal of God's promises to this covenant people.

In baptism God promises by grace alone:

to forgive our sins;

to adopt us into the Body of Christ, the Church;

to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us;

and to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

Water is poured into the font at this time.

Water cleanses;

purifies;

refreshes;

sustains:

Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:

to love and trust God completely;

to forsake the evil of the world; and

to live a new and holy life.

Yet, when we fall into sin, we must not despair of God's mercy,

nor continue in sin,

for baptism is the sign and seal

of God's eternal covenant of grace with us.

PRESENTATION

An elder presents the adult candidates or the parents of children for baptism:

On behalf of the elders

I present (*using full names*)

[who bring their *child/children*]

to receive the sacrament of baptism.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the parents or candidates:

Beloved of God,

you stand before us [having brought *this child/these children*]

to receive the sacrament of baptism.

I ask you, therefore, before God and Christ's church

to reject evil,

to profess your faith in Christ Jesus,
and to confess the faith of the church.*
Do you renounce sin and the power of evil
in your life and in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

At the baptism of adults:

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation,
and through worship and service
seek to advance God's purposes here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

At the baptism of infants or young children:

Do you promise
to instruct *this child/these children*
in the truth of God's Word,
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;
to pray for *them*, to teach *them* to pray;
and to train *them* in Christ's way by your example,
through worship, and
in the nurture of the church?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

The congregation shall rise; the minister or elder addresses the members of the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support
these brothers and sisters
by teaching the gospel of God's love,
by being an example of Christian faith and character, and
by giving the strong support of God's family
in fellowship, prayer, and service?

We do.

The congregation and the candidates (or their parents) join in affirming the faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. The questions may be omitted.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

*Or "and to confess the faith of the church as taught in the creeds and confessions of this church."

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The minister says:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, O holy and gracious God,
for the gift of water.

In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters.

In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil.

You led the children of Israel through the sea
into the freedom of the promised land.

In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord
and your Spirit anointed him.

By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ, the living water,
frees us from sin and death and opens the way to life everlasting.

We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism.

In this water you confirm to us
that we are buried with Christ in his death,
raised to share in his resurrection,
and are being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit,
so that those here baptized may be washed clean and receive new life.
To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power,
now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism. At the baptism of children, the minister may ask the parents of each child:

What is the name of this child?

The parents shall give the Christian name.

The minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

Name of child,

For you Jesus Christ came into the world;
for you he died; and for you he conquered death.

All this he did for you, little one,
though you know nothing of it as yet.

We love because God first loved us.

The minister shall either immerse or pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of each person of the Trinity, saying:

Name of child,

I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may place a hand on the person's head and may mark on the forehead the sign of the cross, saying to each:

Name, child of the covenant
in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit
and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen.

DECLARATION, BLESSING, AND WELCOME

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the only King and Head of the church,
this child/these children of God *is/are* now
received into the visible membership of the holy catholic church,
engaged to confess the faith of Christ, and
to be God's faithful servant(s) until life's end.

The minister shall offer the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
we thank you that you cleanse and renew
these your *children* through your grace alone.
Bless and strengthen *them* daily
with the gift of your Holy Spirit;
unfold to *them* the riches of your love,
deepening *their* faith,
keeping *them* from the power of evil,
and enabling *them* to live a holy and blameless life
until your kingdom comes.

At the baptism of children:

Look with kindness upon these parents.
Let them ever rejoice in the gift you have given them.
Grant them the presence of your Holy Spirit,
that they may bring up *these children*
to know you, to love you, and to serve you. **Amen.**

The congregation shall stand.
Welcome our new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joyfully we receive you into the body of Christ.
Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news,
for we are all one in Christ Jesus.
Alleluia.

The following blessing may be said or sung by the congregation while the elders may greet the baptismal group:

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

The congregation may be seated.

ORDER FOR PROFESSION OF FAITH

The following form includes material for both the visit to the elders and for the public celebration of profession of faith, an approach that encourages strong links between the two events and strengthens the pastoral nature of the conversation with the elders.

PART I: BEFORE THE ELDERS

At the meeting of the elders, the pastor or the presiding elder shall present each person by name. After the presentation, the order proceeds:

SCRIPTURE PROMISES

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

The Scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame."

Romans 10:9-11

Let us pray.

O Lord, source of all light and life,
illumine us with your wisdom,
that what we do at this time may be pleasing in your sight;
that your church may be strengthened and increased; and
that your name be glorified among your people

in both the church and the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FAITH SHARING

The elders shall engage in a conversation with the people, inquiring concerning their acceptance of the Christian faith and the sincerity of their desire to live as confessing members of the congregation. If personal credos (written faith statements) have been prepared, they shall be presented at this time.

THE QUESTIONS

The minister or presiding elder continues:

Dearly beloved in the Lord,
in baptism, we are grafted into Christ,
received into the household of faith, and
made inheritors of the covenant of which baptism is the sign and seal.
In grace and mercy,
God, by the Holy Spirit,
has implanted faith through Word and sacrament.
You have come now before God and the church
to profess your faith in Christ.

The following questions are written for unison response. If individual responses are desired, the minister or presiding elder may ask all questions and then address each person, "What is your response?"

Do you believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and
do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

I do.

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
as the only rule for faith and life?

I do.

Do you, relying on the grace of God, promise
to confess Christ publicly before others,
to serve Christ daily, and
to walk in Jesus' way?

I do.

Do you promise to exhibit the joy of new life in Christ;
to share fully in the life of the church;
to be faithful in worship and service; and
to offer your prayers and gifts?

I do.

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church;
to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation; and
to seek those things which make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

BLESSING

Be assured that as you declare your faith,
God will be faithful
to strengthen you, and
to renew you by the Holy Spirit,
that you may grow in grace and knowledge, and
may keep this covenant faithfully all your days.

The meeting shall conclude with the following or another suitable prayer
offered by the presiding minister or one of the elders, with all joining in the
Lord's Prayer.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we praise you
that by the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ,
you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself; and
that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit
you have bound us to Christ and his service.
We thank you for the baptismal covenant you make with all your servants.
As your grace has drawn name(s) of candidate(s) to you,
continue to strengthen and sustain *them*.
By your Holy Spirit, daily increase in *them* your gifts:
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of the Lord,
the spirit of joy in your presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who has taught us to pray, saying:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

The elders will reach their decision and may establish the date for the public
reception of the new confessing members.

PART II: BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION

The minister addresses the congregation from the font:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:
"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, and
teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called
to the one hope of your calling,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

And/or *Galatians 3:27-28; Romans 6:3-4; John 1:12-13; Acts 2:39*

Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s promises to this covenant people.
In baptism God promises by grace alone:
to forgive our sins,
to adopt us into the body of Christ, the church,
to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us, and
to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font at this time.

Water cleanses,
purifies,
refreshes,
sustains;
Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:
to love and trust God completely,
to forsake the evil of the world, and
to live a new and holy life.

Yet, when we fall into sin,
we must not despair of God’s mercy,
nor continue in sin,
for baptism is the sign and seal
of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

PRESENTATION

An elder shall present the candidates for baptism and/or profession of faith,
using the following statements as appropriate; candidates shall come forward as their names are read.

The elders of *(name of congregation)* have welcomed these persons who
appeared before them and made profession of their Christian faith.

Naming all candidates for baptism and initial profession of faith:

Names (using full names), come before us to make public this profession of faith and to receive the sacrament of baptism;

Naming all baptized persons, including those making initial profession of faith, those reaffirming faith, and those transferring membership from another congregation:

Names (using full names) have been baptized into the body of Christ.

In making public this profession of faith, they affirm the meaning of their baptism.

If it is the congregation's desire to note the congregations from which transferring members are being received, there may be an additional statement, "Names are received from (church name and location)."

We ask them now to declare their faith before God and Christ's church, that we may rejoice together and welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the candidates:

Beloved of God,
I ask you before God and Christ's church
to reject evil,
to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and
to confess the faith of the church.*
Do you renounce sin and the power of evil
in your life and in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation and,
through worship and service,
seek to advance God's purposes
here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

If children of those being received are also to be baptized, the parents are asked:

Do you promise
to instruct *these children/this child*
in the truth of God's Word,
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;
to pray for *them*, to teach *them* to pray; and
to train *them* in Christ's way by your example,

*Or "to confess the faith of the church as taught in the creeds and confessions of this church."

through worship, and
in the nurture of the church?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

The congregation shall rise; the minister or elder addresses the members of the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support

these brothers and sisters

by teaching the gospel of God's love,

by being an example of Christian faith and character, and

by giving the strong support of God's family

in fellowship, prayer, and service?

We do.

The minister or elder addresses the candidates:

Do you promise

to accept the spiritual guidance of the church,

to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation, and

to seek those things that make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

The congregation and the candidates shall join in confessing the faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. The questions may be omitted.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.**

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The congregation may be seated; the minister continues. If baptism is not to be celebrated, proceed to the blessing and welcome.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks,
O holy and gracious God,
for the gift of water.

In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters.

In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil.

You led the children of Israel through the sea
into the freedom of the promised land.

In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord
and your Spirit anointed him.

By his death and resurrection

Jesus Christ, the living water,
frees us from sin and death

and opens the way to life everlasting.

We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism.

In this water you confirm to us

that we are buried with Christ in his death,

raised to share in his resurrection, and

are being renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit,

so that those here baptized

may be washed clean and receive new life.

To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power,

now and forever,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

If children are to receive baptism, the minister may ask the parents of each child:

What is the name of this child?

The parents shall give the Christian name; the minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

Name (use Christian name; omit surname),

for you Jesus came into the world;

for you he died and conquered death;

all this he did for you, little one,

though you know nothing of it as yet.

We love because God first loved us.

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism.

Using Christian name(s), omitting surname(s), the minister shall immerse, pour,

or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of the person of the Trinity, saying:

Name (*use Christian name; omit surname*), I baptize you
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead, saying to each:

Name (*use Christian name; omit surname*), child of the covenant,
in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and
marked as Christ's own forever. **Amen.**

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the only King and Head of the church,
these children of God are now
received into the visible membership of the holy catholic church,
engaged to confess the faith of Christ, and
to be God's faithful servant(s) until life's end.

BLESSING AND WELCOME

The minister may continue by laying hands on the heads of all those being received, offering the prayer of blessing. The elders may join in the laying on of hands.

Defend, O Lord, this your servant, Name (*use Christian name; omit surname*),
with your heavenly grace,
that *he/she* may continue to be yours forever, and
daily increase in your Spirit more and more,
until *he/she* comes to your eternal kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The minister invites the congregation to stand:

By the Holy Spirit all who believe and are baptized receive a ministry
to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and
to love and serve those with whom they live and work.

We are ambassadors for Christ,
who reconciles and makes whole.

We are the salt of the earth;
we are the light of the world.

Welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joyfully we receive you.

**Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news,
for we are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Alleluia.

The following blessing may be said or sung by the congregation while the elders greet the new confessing members:

**The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. Amen.**

Numbers 6:24-26



I. Introduction and history

The past is prologue for the work of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC). The resignation of the previous executive director of the CRCNA and the subsequent resignation of the previous director of denominational ministries were an integral part of the background to the Board of Trustees report to Synod 2011 and, subsequently, to that synod's appointment of a Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture.

The TFRSC report to Synod 2012 identified a number of common themes based on listening sessions with CRCNA staff. These sessions verified the analysis of the Stratagem Report received by the BOT in May 2011 and confirmed the breadth and depth of issues related to structure, culture, and leadership. Synod 2012 agreed. A key feature of the TFRSC work was to develop a new position description for the executive director, to provide a suggested composition of an Executive Director Search Committee, and to describe a timeline for a search process, all of which Synod 2012 approved. We join others in praying for discernment and for the identification of a person who will be interviewed for and appointed to the position of executive director by Synod 2013.

The TFRSC report to Synod 2012 identified issues to be addressed and a proposed timeline for reporting to successive synods. The work of the TFRSC is cumulative. As such, we suggest that readers may also benefit by reviewing the 2012 TFRSC report found in the *Acts of Synod 2012* (pp. 665-88). Continuity is important as we provide an update on our work and present recommendations to synod while also reporting through the Board of Trustees. Our desire is to provide a framework and material for continuing the conversation. Almost all the headings and sections of this report follow the tentative outline of issues to be addressed that were identified in our report to Synod 2012.

The Christian Reformed Church has from its very beginning in 1857 concerned itself with organizing committees and governing boards as needed on an ad hoc basis to accomplish studies or tasks as deemed appropriate. Continuing organizational development is a necessary byproduct of evaluating the current organizational structure to determine how well this structure will serve in the future. Current organizational structure should be evaluated

in the light of what we anticipate in that future. If ministry is our goal and covenantal interdependence is our chosen ministry pattern, then our organizational models need to reflect that choice. Organizational structure is not an end in itself. Organizational structure is not the primary mission of the Christian Reformed Church. It is a tool we use to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the Lord and his people to live out his mission.

The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC) is not the only table where discussion about the future ministry and the future structure of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is taking place. The Executive Director Search Committee is also a place where the conversation has taken place. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA also authorized a “fundamental reframing” of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in September 2012.

One microcosm or example of this “reframing” conversation has been the question of the placement of the Faith Formation Committee work within the structure of the CRCNA. This example also makes clear that the conversation on structure is also a question of culture, leadership, and vision. There are multiple dimensions and a nexus of connections with regard to faith formation. As a denomination committed to covenantal theology, faith formation is not new to our heritage, but it is new to think through what it would mean to structure our work around such a key priority and what this means for our agencies and offices.

Our collection of agencies and offices represents concerns of the church over time and how the church responded to those concerns in their time. Creating a new office for or incorporating faith formation efforts within our structure challenges us either to add another office or to house the work within a current agency. The current discussion asks us to identify our key priorities as a denomination and how we might structure in alignment with those priorities.

Organizational realignment has far-reaching implications for how the ministries of the denomination are structured at the present time. It is our judgment that a significant realignment of the ministries must be considered and is consistent with synod’s expressed desire to see less duplication and greater integration. The faith formation initiative is a great opportunity to make such realignment a reality. The present challenges faced by Faith Alive Christian Resources are not the only, and not even the primary, reason for suggesting realignment. Rather, the Faith Alive issues triggered the timing of the realignment because the administration needed to address both the faith formation initiative as well as deal with the realities of Faith Alive not being able to continue in its present format.

The Board of Trustees, in consultation with the board of Faith Alive Christian Resources and the synodical Faith Formation Committee, will report on the details of the realignments proposed. It is sufficient to indicate that the task force was consulted, had opportunity to comment on the realignment discussion, and leaves it to the administration and the BOT to advance a realignment of the ministries involved.

II. Key material for discussion: “Five Smooth Stones”

The task force has been exposed to and impressed by the testimony and example of the Evangelical Covenant Church. This denomination, which is

similar in size and background, recently revised their structure and strategic plan. They have sought to structure the work of their denomination around “Five Smooth Stones” of ministry priorities or goals within their strategic plans. The concise, clear, and distinct framing of their goals has helped the Evangelical Covenant Church identify ministry priorities and clarify how the denomination and local congregations relate to each other. Appendix A to this report presents an overview of the “Five Smooth Stones,” provided with the permission of the Evangelical Covenant Church. We believe that this material is worthy of synodwide discussion as part of ongoing discernment. The task force has drafted and here proposes “Five Streams” to shape the CRCNA’s structural and cultural development, as presented in Appendix B.

A new mechanism called “collaboration tables” has been developed within the Evangelical Covenant Church. The collaboration table is used to connect departments, agencies, and institutions to advance the cohesive development of each of the five ministry priorities. This is of interest to the task force and the CRCNA, because one of the issues for the task force to address is to “specify the pathway for enhancing communication and collaboration within the denominational offices and to the local offices.” We believe that the proposed *streams* will enhance both communication and collaboration.

Therefore, the task force recommends that synod allow forty-five minutes to hear a presentation of the “Five Smooth Stones” as background to the proposed “Five Streams” for use as ministry priorities and values for organizational development within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. The Five Streams proposal provides a framework for breaking down “silos” and forming collaboration tables.
2. The Five Streams proposal informs the CRCNA’s strategic planning process that is currently under way.
3. The Five Streams proposal emphasizes outcomes rather than the work of agencies.
4. The Five Streams proposal provides a communication model to help the local church and denomination intersect and interact.
5. The Five Streams proposal provides a framework to analyze and continue to review structure and culture.

III. Additional themes

The role of denominations is being questioned in the CRC. Loyalty to the institutions of our denomination has been diminishing. Ministry is becoming more locally focused. The membership of the Christian Reformed Church is more interested in how denominational offices will assist local congregations to do ministry in their own community and less interested in how the denominational offices do ministry “on behalf of the church.” As a result, the conversation is shifting to how to resource congregations to do ministry as we also affirm that congregations resource ministries at the denominational level.

The three “foundational principles” and eleven guidelines adopted by Synod 1987 (see *Agenda for Synod 1987*, pp. 276-80) regarding how the denomination will function are applicable to the current discussion. These principles and guidelines are provided in Appendix B to the TFRSC report

to Synod 2012 (see *Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 684-85). However, they are not the only principles or guidelines that could serve in our current conversation. A team that has analyzed the possibility of adding faith formation as one of the “streams” has articulated a number of values important to our discussion.

A. The CRCNA is congregation based

In the use of its Church Order, the CRC has always been careful not to construct a hierarchical structure but, rather, to make the local congregation the foundation of the denomination. This principle should also affect the discussion on the structure of the denominational agencies and offices. They should all serve, expand, and enhance the ministries of local congregations in their local and global community. The very purpose of this denominational structure must be to serve, network, lead, support, and learn from the local congregations.

B. The CRCNA needs to work within ecclesiastical structure

By way of its Church Order the CRC has established a number of ecclesiastical structures and judicatories that bind congregations together locally, regionally, and binationally. In the local church, the offices of pastor, elder, deacon, and commissioned pastor represent the leadership of the Lord in his church. Regionally, classes support congregations by bringing them together to address common needs and concerns through such structures and relationships as church visitors and regional pastors. Synod is made up of representatives of local congregations through the classes. Any envisioned denominational structures or changes must work through and for these congregationally based ecclesiastical bodies.

C. The CRCNA needs to utilize a team approach

Just as many congregations are moving from a *committee* structure to a *ministry team* structure, any denominational structure should have the same culture and focus. Instead of siloed agencies or ministries that tend to focus only on their own agendas, a congregation-centered agency or ministry will be a team centered on developing and supporting excellent congregational life and mission.

D. The CRCNA needs to be nimble

Congregations today operate in a fast-changing world. They face challenges and opportunities that cannot wait. The new denominational structure must be nimble enough to come alongside congregations quickly and to recognize significant shifts in the environments in which congregations serve. How can we have both centralized functions and distributed connections in an effort to have both aligned and contextualized support?

E. The CRCNA needs to operate as a network

As a network, any new structure will emphasize the interrelatedness of all components. Information, ideas, practices, movements, and initiatives move in all directions, emerging from the congregations through ecclesiastical structures, engaging regional and binational teams, and flowing back through to congregations. Communication constantly flows in all directions.

F. The CRCNA needs to apply a multidisciplinary approach

Rather than addressing issues with a single strategy or from a single agency or office, a new structure will assume that every issue will require a

number of approaches or disciplines. We need each other, and we need to work together.

G. The CRCNA needs to minimize institutional overhead

The CRCNA asks local congregations for very significant financial resources that may be diminishing in the future. There have been (and there will continue to be) questions regarding duplication of efforts and multiplication of personnel. Any new structure will need to address the possibility of combining agencies, offices, and personnel for the purpose of providing a common focus on congregations and eliminating any unnecessary and costly duplication of efforts.

IV. Principles for establishing *healthy* organizational structure

During the course of our conversation, it has become clearer that our goal is to nurture a *healthy* denominational structure that better serves local congregations in their mission.

Our research identified the following principles for establishing organizational structure as identified in *Business: Through the Eyes of Faith* by Richard C. Chewning, John W. Eby, and Shirley J. Roels (Harper & Row, 1990; pp. 124-25):

1. Develop structures that provide maximum freedom for every employee, based on their levels of maturity and commitment, as long as they work within the objectives of the organization. Decision-making should be at the lowest level possible.
2. Create an environment that rewards individual creativity and initiative. Encourage employees to think of new and better ways of doing things.
3. Give rewards in ways that encourage group effort and cooperation between people and operational units. Rewards should also encourage workers to do what is best for the company in the long run, and not only what makes them look good in the short run.
4. Clearly identify responsibilities, lines of accountability and communication patterns.
5. Develop structures that provide for interaction and collaboration between all people and groups involved in a project, even though they might be in different departments or divisions. They should facilitate good lateral communication.
6. Develop lean structures with as few hierarchical levels as possible.

These principles were identified in a book published by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities that sought to present business as a reflection of God's kingdom. In the same way, our organization as a church needs to be such a reflection.

Common language is a key to good communication. As an aid for development of a common language, we provide in Appendix C a glossary of terms.

V. The nature of a binational denomination—how to incorporate into CRCNA structure

In 2012 the TFRSC identified a key issue: the need to address the nature of being a binational denomination and how best to incorporate binationality into the CRCNA structure. In August 2012, the director of Canadian ministries stepped down from his position. An interim director of Canadian ministries was appointed and given the task of analyzing the position of

director of Canadian ministries. The task force is grateful for the collegiality and collaboration with the TFRSC during this project, and for the coordination of work on the part of the interim director of Canadian ministries.

The interim director of Canadian ministries and the TFRSC have taken an active role in developing and conducting a survey and holding multiple conversations with church representatives. The convergence of the opportunity to review the position of director of Canadian ministries and at the same time address the question of how best to function as a binational denomination has been a wonderful illustration of how the TFRSC can host a “table of conversation and discernment.”

VI. Cultivating binationality in the CRCNA

A. Introduction

In the CRCNA we describe ourselves as a binational church. This is a reality we embrace and a value we want to cultivate. As a binational church, we share a common mission and work out of a shared purpose in different contexts.

This section of the task force report addresses

- the priority of the mission of God.
- a description of binationality—themes and concerns.
- how binationality embraces commonalities and differences.
- ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA structure, culture, and leadership.

B. The mission of God

God is on a mission to make his kingdom a reality in the world. He calls his people to incarnate his message of love, hope, reconciliation, and justice in their context. What especially binds us together is the shared call to be engaged in the *mission* of God. As we talk about binationality, organization, culture, or leadership, our discussion always needs to be framed in the context of that mission. Our God is a sending God who wants to reach the nations (Greek: *ethnous*). He provides his Holy Spirit to the church and to each of us in order for us to be people sent to engage in his mission. That is our starting point and needs to be our primary focus.

The mission of God happens in context. The mission of God is to be incarnated into different contexts. There are at least five such contexts.

- Local: The local church as a Christian community ministers in its setting.
- Regional: Local congregations and ministries work together in a classis or region.
- National: National ministries engage in and reflect the unique values and culture of a country.
- Binational: The CRCNA works in a binational setting as we build on each other’s strengths.
- Global: Our mission engagement is global, working through partnerships in many contexts and nations around the world.

Because we believe that all areas of life are to come under the reign of God, the context of our ministry matters. As we carry out our unique mission

as the CRCNA in these various contexts, it is important to see how these contexts shape how we organize for ministry, provide resources to enhance ministry, and make decisions about ministry. Like all of life, how we organize for ministry needs to undergo review and renewal on a regular basis.

C. Ministry in a binational church

As we discuss binationality and how it functions in the church, it is important to begin with a description of what we mean by the term *binationality*.

The CRCNA is a Reformed denomination that operates in the United States and Canada. The CRCNA values being a binational denomination for the opportunity it provides to combine pursuit of a common mission with an intentional and meaningful engagement with different national, regional, and local contexts for ministry. Binationality in the CRCNA fosters a culture of gracious space that encourages different expressions of common convictions to achieve common goals of meaningful witness and effective, holistic ministry in different contexts. Intentional recognition of commonalities and significant differences allows adequate flexibility in leadership, structures, and policies to respond to each national context as well as regional, local, and ethnic contexts.

D. Themes of binationality

In order to flesh out this definition of binationality, the following themes are important:

1. The CRCNA has a shared purpose in mission
We share a similar passion for God's kingdom work, and we work together for one purpose. The CRCNA has a shared sense of its mission, expressed in congregations and ministries in Canada and the United States and through partnerships around the world.
2. One church—different contexts/cultures
We are a binational church, working as one denomination in two countries in North America. Binationality involves two national identities—each working in different contexts. We recognize the cultural context of each country and how the distinct political and legal realities shape each context and influence how we engage in ministry.
3. Different contexts and cultures are expressed in the way we do ministry
We build on each other's respective strengths and learn to honor differences that are reflected geographically, culturally, and socially in the different countries and regions. This takes organizational shape and is reflected in the way in which we make decisions locally and nationally.
4. Organizational space is provided to reflect different contexts
We take a posture of making gracious organizational space to reflect different contexts. Developing that space means recognizing the need to discern how to do ministry by setting goals, identifying strategies, and developing action for each context.

E. Some concerns about binationality

As we discuss binationality, some concerns and questions are often raised. They include some of the following:

1. Fear of separation or division

Often the discussion about binationality prompts fear of separation or division. Then the discussion revolves around separation or conformity. This fear of division stifles space for legitimate differentiation. The press toward being singular causes us to lose the richness of possible options in-between those two positions that honor binationality.

2. Fear that one nation dominates the other

There is a fear that one nation may dominate or overshadow the other by its size, location of most of staff, and so forth. There is a sense that there can be unequal voices, especially in the decision-making process about ministry.

3. Management tends to be centralized

A more centralized approach to management and organization leads to a model that assumes a single authority and less differentiated space for building relevant ministry in each nation.

It is important to allow the key themes about binationality and these concerns to interact with each other in order to find our way forward together. There are differing approaches to various ministry activities in the two countries. By enhancing the unique approach in each country, we can also bring those strengths to each other to inform each other for our understanding together.

F. Framing the conversation

Often the conversation about binationality is framed as an “either/or”: either we are one denomination, or we will split into two. When this kind of polarity enters the conversation, it makes it almost impossible to have a substantive conversation about nuanced alternatives. In this approach, binationality and nationality become polar opposites requiring people to choose one or the other.

In our denominational covenant, we work out of a spirit of trust with an emphasis on mutuality. We find ways in which one part of the denomination can bless the other. The move is not to independence but to interdependence. The local church does have a unique place and a central place in our polity, but that place does not make it independent of classis or synod.

In our denominational covenant we work out of a spirit of trust in order to cultivate and honor diversity. Each of the various partners must be given space to reflect their unique setting and context in tandem with our shared purpose. By respecting each context and pressing fully into what it means to engage in ministry in that context, we honor the uniqueness and bring those strengths into the shared conversation. We recognize and respect each for what it brings to the partnership.

G. Commonalities and differences contribute to effectiveness of ministry

A shared North American culture and history facilitate common action to meet common challenges. Common features that were frequently identified in a survey on binationality include the role of immigration in the CRCNA

and the fact that Canada and the United States are both wealthy, highly developed countries. Common challenges include being a prophetic witness in an increasingly secularized and materialistic North American context and fulfilling our global responsibilities.

At the same time, there are significant differences between the United States and Canada in population size, culture, historical development, and governing systems. These need careful consideration in the development of effective ministries in each context. As someone stated in the survey on binationality, “generic North American history and culture does not exist.” National differences are significant for effective ministry, in addition to local, regional, and ethnic differences.

Within common areas, differentiation may be needed to effectively witness in national context. Immigration, for example, is a common history. Current immigration trends, however, differ substantively. Immigration to the United States is dominated by working-class Hispanics and Latinos who have a Christian background (mostly Roman Catholic); while immigration to Canada is dominated by middle-class Asians and Africans who are largely non-Christian. To be missional in these two contexts will require differentiation. A one-size-fits-all mentality will hinder rather than advance common goals.

Within some areas of ministry previously identified as unique to one nation are common themes in the other nation that warrant more attention. Canadian aboriginal ministries were established to work with people who are affected by how Canada treats its First Peoples, distinct from CRC ministry with Native Americans in the United States. As each develops, areas of commonality in history and current challenges may lead to greater collaboration.

CRCNA ministry is affected by both commonalities and differences in our national contexts. Following are major themes that emerged from a survey we conducted on how binationality functions within the CRCNA:

1. The mix of common and differentiated approaches varies by ministry area

Some areas of ministry, such as global missions, benefit from a higher level of common action to pool resources and manage costs. Other areas, such as race relations, chaplaincy, ecumenical action, social justice, and aboriginal/American native ministries require a higher level of differentiation to be effective in each national context. Some areas of ministry, such as diaconal outreach and church planting, give more weight to local and regional context. Some areas, such as faith formation and training, are most effectively pursued with attention to both common and differentiated approaches.

2. Intentional consideration of national contextual differences is essential for effective ministry

Deliberate attention is needed in the planning and delivery of ministries to determine when commonality or differentiation is most effective. Too often standardized approaches are assumed to be applicable in diverse settings; leaders need to intentionally create organizational space for church members to deliberate about their context and develop effective strategies for engagement that have the potential to transform culture.

Ignoring binationality has costs, including missed opportunities for ministry. Taking full advantage of opportunities in chaplaincy, for example, requires recognition that the Canadian health care system operates differently than the U.S. health care system. Prisons and the correctional system in Canada are managed differently than in the United States, with implications for prison chaplaincy. While the U.S. and Canadian military cooperate in some conflict zones, understanding how each approaches chaplaincy is essential to the process of developing chaplaincies within the military. Paying attention to binationality benefits ministry.

Differences in the roles of governing agencies and the roles of churches in the public life of each nation have implications for ministry from diaconal outreach to ecumenical activities. World Renew, for example, has benefited from particular Canadian approaches to international development. Community services, an expanding area of ministry for deacons and churches, are affected by differences in social policy and the funding of public services. While churches in the United States need to shape their public witness in the context of an ethos and laws shaped by separation of church and state, churches in Canada face the challenge of adjusting from more recognized roles for ecumenical church bodies in shaping public life and public policies to more organic ways of working for justice in Canada.

H. Rationale for changes in organization, culture, and leadership

As we consider the reasons for making change in organization, culture, and leadership, it is helpful to review the main rationale for those changes.

1. Reviewing our structures and ways of organizing for ministry is part of our Reformed posture for ongoing renewal.
2. The different contexts for ministry require expression regarding how to carry out ministry in each setting.
3. Conversational and planning space is needed to provide opportunities for dialogue to consider trends, share learnings, and explore strategies. These spaces need to be intentional.
4. There are opportunities we can identify for the church in each country to do what God is calling us to do. Without specific attention to these opportunities in a national setting, we could lose these opportunities.
5. The local church needs to make a significant missional shift to engage with its local community. We need to strengthen our bonds and networks nationally, binationally, and globally. This has implications for how the denomination resources classes and congregations.
6. Denominational leadership especially needs to focus on animating vision and engagement in ministry in the community locally, nationally, and globally. It is a leadership that is yearning to walk alongside to discern how God is leading us in the mission.

I. Ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA structure, culture, and leadership

Our conversation about binationality and its implications for organization, culture, or leadership needs to be framed in the context of the mission of God. As we do our work, it is God's mission and this vision that shape what we do. We need to find ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA

structure, culture, and leadership. This is an ongoing process of renewal. Following are five possible ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA, including specific suggestions on how to translate each into action.

1. Gathering to discern vision and understanding of our context

We must intentionally and regularly gather in our respective national contexts to understand trends that are happening, the culture in which we are doing our living, and the implications for our ministry as a church.

- a. Visioning and planning at the classis level needs to be cultivated for member churches and related ministries to do creative work to discern their context and to resource churches and people to engage in their mission.
- b. National conversations for members of the CRC to deliberate on ministry priorities and strategies for effective witness within the respective contexts should be developed and held on a regular basis (every 2-3 years), either in conjunction with synod meetings or as free-standing meetings, to which classes would send appropriate delegations (i.e., triennial conference). Regional gatherings could be included as a step between individual classes and a national forum.

This process of discernment and visioning needs to involve a dynamic interaction between the local/classical initiative and a national/denominational initiative. In this way there would be significant contributions from the local context and also the national context and, as the two interact, a discernment of priorities for ministry and vision in contexts that are both classically, nationally, and binationally based. The process would complement and interact with the vision and strategic plan of the CRCNA.

2. Developing an organizational culture

We must cultivate a posture of heightened awareness and intentionality to engage with our respective contexts and foster gracious space for differentiated approaches within a commitment to mutual accountability for a common mission.

- a. The potential need for differentiation to effectively respond in a national context should be considered in relation to every ministry rather than assuming general commonality with a few exceptions for so-called “unique” national ministries.
- b. Deliberate consideration of each national context and implications for ministry, along with respect for local and regional contexts, ought to be incorporated into the mandates, planning processes, and accountability mechanisms of administrative and governing structures of the CRCNA.

3. Senior leadership position

Note: There is a process under way to discern the role and function of the director of Canadian ministries. That process will propose further definition of this senior leadership position to the BOT at its May 2013 meeting.

A senior Canadian leadership position that works closely with the executive director (ED) of the CRCNA is mandated to cultivate and nurture vision and facilitate ongoing strategic planning. To make binationality an authentic leadership value, a major component of the ED position will have to be the intentional advancement of a consultative and flourishing binational organizational culture and communion.

- a. The senior Canadian leadership role works closely with the ED in order to nurture and cultivate a vision in both countries. These roles provide regular reporting about progress in discerning and implementing the vision and the proposed strategies. There are a variety of options that can be considered for the senior Canadian leadership role.
- b. The senior Canadian leadership position and the ED lead and regularly report to the BOT on these and other initiatives to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA.

4. Senior staff team to develop collaboration

A senior staff team at the national level, currently known as the Canadian Ministries Team, should focus on ministry goals and priorities and areas of potential collaboration with churches, classes, and the agencies and ministries.

- a. A staff team should review the implementation of denominational and agency ministry plans and recommend changes to ensure that plans and programs effectively address the trends, issues, and challenges identified at national, regional, and local levels.
- b. A staff team should be linked to regional- and classis-based initiatives in order to interact with learnings “on the ground” and be encouraged to go “where the energy is.” The intent would be to develop strategies on which the agencies would work in order to better resource classes and congregations. The staff team would give input to a joint binational staff team (such as the Ministries Leadership Council) that would give overall leadership on how to translate denominational priorities into effective strategies for ministry.

5. Governance

The Board of Trustees and the boards of agencies should cultivate attention to the discernment and decision-making process for authorizing and implementing ministries in each national context.

- a. The Board of Trustees can cultivate an awareness of national context by having a gathering of board members in each national setting that can help interpret the culture and priorities of each national context into the full Board meetings. For the Board of Trustees (BOT), this could mean the creation of appropriate structures within the BOT, such as standing committees for U.S. and Canadian ministries, with a mandate to advise the BOT on national level priorities and strategies in all areas of ministry.
- b. The Board of Trustees, as well as the boards of agencies and institutions, can pay particular attention to the decision making process toward authorizing and carrying out ministries in each country in

compliance with the laws of that country and its accounting expectations, as well as to intentional ways in which boards make decisions about ministries happening in each nation.

J. Closing comments on binationality

Implementation of the above suggestions would respond to the themes and concerns about binationality raised in the issues identified by the task force and in the survey on binationality recently conducted by the task force. More important, pursuing these directions would enhance the ministries of the CRCNA in both national contexts to achieve our common mission.

We recommend that synod instruct the Board of Trustees to explore the proposed pathways for cultivating binationality as presented in this report, including its governance implications, in consultation with the interim director of Canadian ministries and the executive director.

VII. Analyze the structure and culture that will best support and be most relevant for the local church

This topic has been the ongoing work of the TFRSC and is the overall trajectory of our work. This task will not be completed during this year, but we desire to provide an update to the Board of Trustees, synod, and the church regarding how we have continued to address this task.

In the past year, we desired to model participatory management by providing an opportunity for leaders and staff within the CRCNA structure not only to identify concerns but also to give insights on how to address those concerns. The material from this survey has been summarized according to various themes and is attached as Appendix D. We appreciate all the insights shared, and we note that while there is a “clustering” of thoughts and themes, there are also divergent approaches. This divergence illustrates the breadth of the challenge as we continue our work.

As mentioned earlier, an additional survey and analysis focused on the issue of binationality. This material provided insights for findings presented within this report as summarized above.

In addition to the foregoing, the TFRSC has maintained contact with the work of the Executive Director Search Committee, the Strategic Planning Task Group, and the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team about the Ministry Plan priorities of the denomination.

The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture is continuing to analyze what could be learned from an analysis of the structure of the Evangelical Covenant Church as well as to respond to other materials, input, and questions directed to the TFRSC.

Based on our studies, conversation, and collaboration tables, the following summarizes the information received around culture, collaboration, and communication:

A. Culture norms, issues, and challenges

- There has been a general increase in trust between staff and the leadership under the current interim executive director.
- The CRCNA is ready to enter into a “renewal” stage that focuses on increased participation, collaboration, and respect for a diversity of ideas.

Recognition of the need for renewal has led to prayerful discernment regarding the pathway forward for local churches and the denomination.

- The current leadership understands the need for change to address denominational issues and is capable of changing culture. In addition, it is currently mapping external and internal environmental forces to better understand the issues and how to approach the changes.
- The denomination has made great strides in developing information, resources, and assistance for local churches. However, there appears to be a growing disconnect between the local church and the denomination.
- There is consensus that current culture within the CRCNA needs to change and improve.
- Newcomers and new congregations do not easily embrace the culture of the denomination, and the culture of the denomination does not easily embrace newcomers and new congregations.
- The culture of the denomination may be hindering the growth of the church and its ministries.
- Norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions in the CRCNA differ between the United States and Canada.
- “Things don’t always get done” largely because of the red tape, bureaucracy, and lack of coordination, participation, and collaboration.
- The current structure supports an authoritative (command and control) culture over a collaborative culture.
- Staff do not generally feel empowered to make decisions within the context of their positions, but feel strongly they have good ideas and desire to contribute.
- Staff do not always feel they can voice their opinion freely—in part because the leadership does not always invite a diversity of ideas.
- Staff are not always apprized of new developments as they arise; nor do they always communicate with the leadership and receive the expected positive feedback.
- Although the CRCNA has stated values, they are not necessarily modeled or practiced throughout the organization.
- Conflict is not always dealt with swiftly or managed effectively.
- The CRCNA is not adapting to the changing environment in its congregations, in North American society as a whole, and globally.
- Ecclesiology determines our mission, vision, and strategies. Some believe that God’s mission and vision for our denomination should shape our ecclesiology and our strategies for the future of his kingdom.

B. Suggestions for improvement to culture, collaboration, and communication

- Increase participation at all levels within the denomination (including congregations) as key to increased collaboration, communication, creativity, innovation, passion, and effective decision making in supporting local churches, ministries, and programs.
- Develop a culture that “invites engagement” and supports the consideration of a diversity of ideas from persons and groups through encouragement and recognition.
- Continually examine how societal changes are affecting congregations and what vigorous responses can be made as a denomination to address those changes.

- Continually explore ways to assist local congregations in responding to their needs as they change by helping to develop a culture of regular exploration and analysis.
- Explore what collaborative tools need to be employed to unify ministries within a common vision for the denomination.
- Exemplify servant leadership as a core value within the CRCNA where the denomination more clearly serves local churches.
- Examine how a decentralized regional, classical, or organizational system can better support and serve congregations through increased training, resourcing, encouragement, and prevention rather than reaction and centralization.
- Examine and implement a culture where institutional loyalty and governance are replaced successfully with grassroots participation.
- Communicate . . . communicate . . . communicate.
- Develop a culture that invites local churches to seek the CRCNA as “the partner of choice” for mission, resources, and God’s work without the bureaucracy normally associated with the denomination.
- Examine ways of developing a culture within congregations that prevents or effectively manages conflict.
- Reward risk-taking when it is done in union with the Lord, by his Spirit, and for the well-being of the denomination and kingdom work. Risk-taking allows for greater empowerment of staff than the current organizational culture and structures.
- Create a culture that continually examines how women and people of various ethnicities can play important leadership roles for change and renewal across the denomination.

The task force recommends that synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the executive director to identify the process for providing participatory training to staff and the BOT in order to develop a “collaborative culture” where staff, leaders, and congregants are heard and work together to share, develop, and implement a common vision for the denomination.

The task force recommends that synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the executive director and leadership be mandated to explore, embrace, model, promote, and implement a cultural model in the CRCNA that enhances collaboration and effective communication within (and between) its offices, the Board of Trustees, and congregations as described in the above suggestions.

In addition, the task force recommends that synod instruct the Board of Trustees to, within eighteen months of being in the position, request that the newly appointed executive director initiate a survey similar to the Wilder Research Collaboration Factors survey with CRCNA departments, ministries, and agencies to determine success in making a cultural change within pre-determined “projects” requiring three or more groups working together on a particular ministry.

For the benefit of the newly appointed ED and the task force, it is recommended that synod appoint the new executive director to serve on the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture.

VIII. Delineate the continued role and support structure for specialized ministries

Sometimes the naming of a concern begins the process of addressing the concern. That appears to be the case for the CRC specialized ministries. The need to address the continued role and support structure for specialized ministries was a key theme identified by the TFRSC in its report to Synod 2012. This theme was also present in the initial survey of staff and ministry leaders.

The specialized ministries include such offices as Race Relations, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Safe Church Ministry, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and Social Justice and Hunger Action. A key guideline affirmed by Synod 1987 was that “new ministries should be placed within existing agencies.” As various offices have arisen, that particular guideline has not been followed. While the “edge” of an advocacy voice has been served by separate offices, the joining of these concerns into a chorus that would manifest greater coordination and accountability has not occurred.

In response to the issue raised by the specialized ministries, we have been advised by the interim executive director that an experiment is unfolding in which some of these offices are clustering together. For example, Safe Church Ministry and Sustaining Congregational Excellence are now seeing their work and ministry coordinated with Pastor-Church Relations.

In the coming years, the task force will address the board structure of all agencies. At the same time, we do not foresee that the continued, independent operation of these small specialized ministries (sometimes one- or two-person offices) is the pathway for greater coordination and accountability in order to more effectively and efficiently serve the church. As a result, we recommend the continued use of an interim “clustering” of such offices as we seek different models, and we want to provide space for experiments as we seek to develop a support structure that is more effective in providing greater service for the local church.

IX. Define how administrative support services function within a denominational office

By definition, the department units of the denominational offices—Human Resources, Finance, Advancement, Information Technology, Communications, Fleet and Facilities—provide support services for the agencies and the denominational office. They currently serve under the direction of the director of finance and administration, who serves under the supervision of the executive director.

An analysis of the past administration makes clear that the nexus of connection and intersection between the agencies and the executive director needs greater clarity regarding how each department interacts with each agency. This clarification of role, function, and posture has been part of the ongoing work of the current interim executive director and deputy executive director.

X. Revise senior executive leadership position descriptions

As synod moves to the appointment of a new executive director (ED), it is clear that the CRCNA will need to develop a senior executive leadership team with the input of the new ED and take into account the ED’s gifts. This

process can occur within the next year, prior to Synod 2014; such timing would be very helpful for the work and ministry of the new ED. As such, the task force asks that synod affirm that the Board of Trustees is authorized to approve revised senior leadership position descriptions as presented to the Board by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture in consultation with the newly appointed ED. Upon approval of the revised position descriptions, appropriate search processes may begin in order to fill the senior leadership team prior to Synod 2014.

XI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant privilege of the floor to Rev. Joel R. Boot, chair, and Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, reporter, when the report of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture is discussed.

B. That synod allow forty-five minutes to hear a presentation of the “Five Smooth Stones” as background to the proposed “Five Streams” for use as ministry priorities and values for organizational development within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. The Five Streams proposal provides a framework for breaking down “silos” and forming collaboration tables.
2. The Five Streams proposal informs the CRCNA’s strategic planning process that is currently under way.
3. The Five Streams proposal emphasizes outcomes rather than the work of agencies.
4. The Five Streams proposal provides a communication model to help the local church and denomination intersect and interact.
5. The Five Streams proposal provides a framework to analyze and continue to review structure and culture.

C. That synod endorse the ministry priorities as identified in the “Five Streams” document in Appendix B to this report for discussion and discernment within the church, its agencies, boards, and planning groups.

D. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to explore the proposed pathways for cultivating binationality, including its governance implications, presented in this report, in consultation with the senior leader within Canada and the executive director (secs. V-VI).

E. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the executive director to identify the process for providing participatory training to staff and the BOT in order to develop a “collaborative culture” in which staff, leaders, and congregants are heard and work together to share, develop, and implement a common vision for the denomination (sec. VII, B).

F. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to mandate the executive director and leadership to explore, embrace, model, promote, and implement a cultural model in the CRCNA that enhances collaboration and effective communication within (and between) its offices, the Board of Trustees, and congregations as described in the above suggestions (sec. VII, B).

G. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to request that the newly appointed executive director, within eighteen months of being in the position, initiate a survey similar to the Wilder Research Collaboration Factors survey with CRCNA departments, ministries, and agencies to determine success in making a cultural change within predetermined “projects” requiring three or more groups working together on a particular ministry (sec. VII, B).

H. That synod appoint the new executive director to serve on the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (sec. VII, B).

I. That synod affirm that the Board of Trustees is authorized to approve revised senior leadership position descriptions as presented to the Board by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture in consultation with the newly appointed ED. Upon approval of the revised position descriptions, appropriate search processes may begin in order to fill the senior leadership team prior to Synod 2014 (sec. X).

J. That synod thank Rev. Peter Borgdorff and Rev. Joel R. Boot for their service as secretary and chair, respectively, to the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture.

Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture

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Appendix A

Five Smooth Stones Report

Organizing for Mission (Covenant Executive Board, October 2011)

Background and Introduction

Throughout the history of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) there have been defining moments that have carried this movement to new levels of faithfulness and fruitfulness. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses whose legacy of vision, sacrifice, and priority over the course of 126 years has moved us forward at critical junctures.

Now it is our turn. Organizing for Mission is a summons to our own deeper levels of resolve and determination for the sake of God’s work in the world.

When I became president I identified the core assignment for this season this way: to advance the mission while bridging to the future. This is fundamentally a season of positioning the Covenant for a strong future, even while attending to the mission that is currently ours.

To frame the review we have undertaken a three question process to understand our mission, to clarify our priorities, and to propose ways of expanding our capacity to serve.

The first question is the *purpose* question: What are we trying to accomplish in the lives of real people in real places?

In a commitment to the full dimensionality of God's work in the world, we use this understanding:

We join God in God's mission to see more disciples, among more populations, in a more caring and just world.

The second question is the *strategy* question: What are the key priorities that will help us accomplish that mission?

We have identified five key priorities. These core ministries, sometimes referred to as our "five smooth stones" recalling David going into battle with Goliath, are:

- Develop leaders
- Start and strengthen churches
- Make and deepen disciples
- Love mercy – Do Justice
- Serve globally

That leads to the third question, which is the *mobilizing* question: What is the best alignment of personnel, structures and resources to accomplish those strategies?

It is this third question that this report addresses by proposing a series of 27 recommendations.

Process

The October, 2010 meeting of the ECC Executive Board authorized the president to undertake this review, with a report to be made to the October, 2011 meeting. Evelyn Johnson, former superintendent of the Pacific Southwest Conference, was assigned as project manager. The process has had four primary stages.

Stage one, the balance of fall 2010, was framing the scope of the assignment and the identification of values to maintain in the design process. See appendix 1.

Stage two was the recruitment and activation of a 20 person project team representative of both the structural and demographic mosaic of the ECC. This included two representatives from each of the following: ECC executive board, conference executive boards, council of administrators, council of superintendents, and institutions. The balance was made up of individuals representative of the congregational and demographic diversity of the ECC, with a bias towards younger leaders. See appendix 2 for listing of members.

In stage three, beginning in January 2011, the project team gave itself to a current state assessment, using task groups to look broadly at all that is currently being undertaken. An extensive array of background materials, surveys, and interviews informed the work throughout this and the next phase. See appendix 3.

Stage four then moved toward the future, with a new round of different task groups proposing ways forward in each of the five priority areas. These initial proposals were then reviewed and refined by the entire team at an

August retreat, with all refined proposals supported by the entire team. An additional set of recommendations around institutions and corporations was also affirmed by the entire team.

Since that time these have been reviewed with and further refined by feedback gained from both the council of superintendents and ECC administrators.

Anticipated Result and Required Resolve

Key to the organizational design work was the need to articulate an anticipated outcome, or future footprint, around which capacity issues could be addressed. Essentially, this was the need to envision the potential scope and scale of the ministry of the ECC over the next decade to use as a planning point.

The basic anticipated footprint is this:

- 1,000 congregations
- >30% of congregations among populations of color or intentionally multi-ethnic
- 250,000 aggregate attendance on any given Sunday (implied constituency of 400,000 regular attenders)
- 2,500 credentialed clergy
- 1,000,000 lives impacted globally through international partnerships and initiatives

While these figures represent an aggressive outcome, their deeper importance is pointing to the required resolve necessary to achieve the result.

For example, to achieve 1,000 congregations means church planting must remain a central priority to our mission here in the United States and Canada across all conferences, since this represents the planting of the next 200 congregations. This in turn means we will need to address resourcing all conferences in church planting, including those with limited finances and staffing. It likewise implies a sustained commitment to congregational vitality, taking a preventative approach to congregational health, ensuring that more of our congregations have strong traction into the future.

To achieve greater than 30% diversity of congregations will require that one-half of all church plants be among populations of color or intentionally multi-ethnic. This in turn requires a fresh look at long term and sustainable strategies for ethnic and multi-ethnic ministries, particularly for immigrant and urban contexts. It will mean living with even greater intentionality around the Five-fold Test in becoming a more authentic multi-ethnic movement (appendix 4). And it will call us into areas of biblically-rooted compassion, mercy and justice to address societal matters having a disproportionate impact on constituent groups.

To see 250,000 in average attendance means we will need to be resolutely engaged in evangelism, with people further finding meaningful pathways to deepen faith and obedience in their walk with God.

To see a global impact of one million lives will require not only the continued sending of missionaries and partnerships that strengthen national churches, but additional focused initiatives, and coming alongside congregationally-generated projects .

All of this requires capable leadership from clergy and laity alike. To see 2,500 clergy implies a deeper commitment to raising up the vocational option for women and men, as well as contextualized and life-long delivery systems of training. For laity, it implies a major step forward in the development and delivery of relevant resourcing.

Yes, the anticipated footprint drives design capacity considerations. But garnering the required resolve around the underlying implications will be the decisive factor for achieving progress.

Design Considerations

The scenarios that follow for each of the five ministry priorities are NOT organizational charts for departments and conferences per se. Rather, they deal with mechanisms that clarify responsibility, expand capacity, and increase coordination.

Throughout there is a desire to bring resourcing closer to congregations through the resourcing of conferences, as well as through taking advantage of expertise already resident in our ministerium, laity, and congregations.

Certain aspects related to scale, identity, resourcing, coordination, and research and development continue to be well-served from a center point.

The five ministry priorities serve as the organizing framework. To approach these, the existing departmental structure is the baseline that is used. It was felt important to first live into the priorities, and then let any lessons learned inform future departmental reorganization, if any. There is sufficient flexibility in the current by-laws to begin by living into the articulated priorities through a cross-departmental approach.

The existing conference structure is likewise the beginning baseline that is used. Long-established loyalties, uneven interior regions of strength within conferences themselves, organizational complexities tied to conference institutions (such as camps), and added administrative costs mitigated against the redrawing of boundaries. The availability of staff to smaller conferences and the scalability of staff in larger conferences is a key challenge in resourcing mission and ministry across the ECC. There is a concept for how neighboring conferences adjacent to areas of opportunity can jointly plant a new region (appendix 5).

All institutions and corporations are identified within one of the five priorities. A separate set of recommendations focused on internal processes is included. The full report on institutions and corporations is found as appendix 6.

The focus of this assignment is the five key ministry priorities. There are other important undergirding operational areas that provide integral support to the whole of our mission such as communication, information technology, business functions, financial services, insurance and pension benefits, donor development, event support, and human resources. Once direction in the five areas is clarified through action on accompanying recommendations, we will be able to address opportunities and approaches in these areas as well.

Capacity Mechanisms

In the scenarios that follow, there is reference to various new mechanisms to expand capacity and increase coordination.

Collaboration Table: An innovating, catalyzing, coordinating structure to advance the cohesive development of a core ministry priority.

Expert Practitioners/Best Practice Centers: Individuals and settings that model and share effective ministry practices.

Networks: Affinity groupings around a ministry area or context for mutual encouragement and best-practice sharing.

Regional Services: ECC staff or shared conference staff providing a service to multiple conferences.

“Chief Ministry Officer”: A new position (yet to be titled) that helps operationally in the collaboration, coordination, execution and attainment of ministry priorities across departments and conferences, freeing the president to focus on strategic direction, fund development, and cohesive activities.

Partner Organizations: Partnerships with like-minded entities where collaboration can dramatically leverage capacity.

Scenario Summaries

Following you will find scenarios for each of the five ministry priority areas. Each includes a vision for that area, a delineation of basic responsibilities, a schematic to picture that inter-relatedness, and a set of recommendations to move towards implementation.

Following the five scenarios are a set of additional general recommendations that influence all five areas.

This is followed by a set of recommendations for various processes related to institutions and corporations.

All of the recommendations were approved by the Covenant Executive Board on October 15, 2011.

Develop Leaders

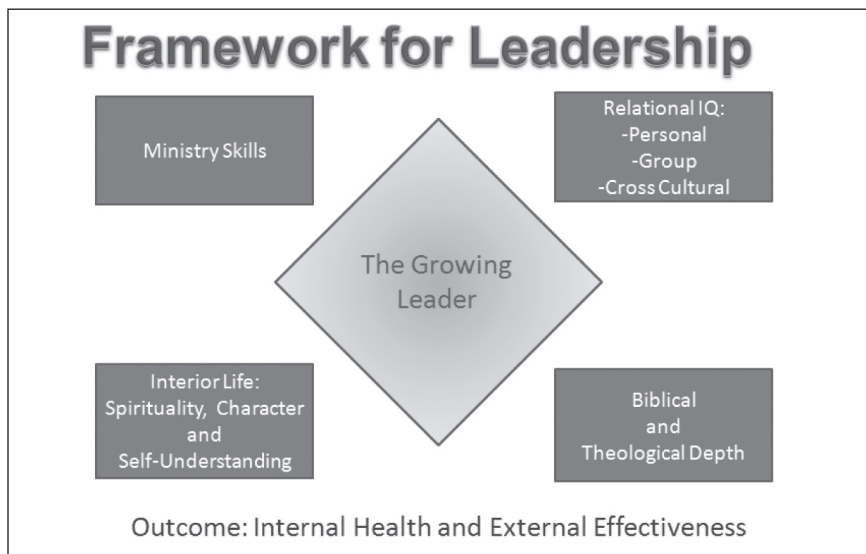
Key vision for Developing Leaders: That through expanded capacity and enhanced coordination, the ECC raise up and develop leaders (clergy and lay, female and male, reflective of the ECC mosaic), for the ever-increasing challenges of ministry. In believing that everyone can grow in leadership, we envision in particular that life-time vocational development will be the accepted norm among clergy with regular and contextual growth opportunities; that clergy will have defined resources for career-stage thresholds (entry, mid-career, legacy); and that lay leadership resourcing will be elevated.

Key Considerations to Accomplishing the Vision

1. That a baseline leadership construct guide the development of leadership resources.*
2. That all dimensions of the Covenant already do and will continue to contribute to the development of clergy and lay leaders.
3. That an ECC Center for Leadership be established that would convene, coordinate, communicate, and collaborate across contributors related to clergy development, and do the same plus create resources related to lay leadership development.

4. That Ordered Ministry staffing be configured to include service-region resourcing (e.g., east/west) for conferences related to credentialing; care and discipline; and clergy development pathways.**

*OFM Recommended Leadership Construct:



**OFM Recommended Regional Assistance through Ordered Ministry Credentialing:

Resource for conferences

Train conference Committees on Ministerial Standing

Maintain standards

Seminary site visits

Care/Discipline:

First responder along with superintendent

Plan and lead disclosure meeting with superintendent

Plan and monitor implementation of aftercare process for pastor and congregation

Clergy Development Pathway:

Covenant Orientation

First Call resourcing

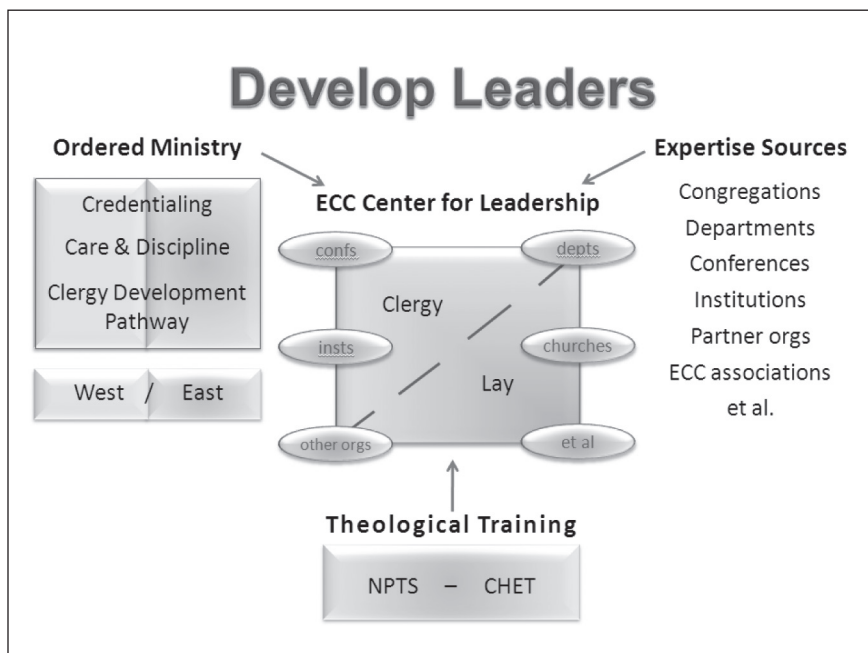
New Call/Revisioning (i.e., mid-career)

Finish Well

Implementation Recommendations Approved

1. That the creation of an ECC Center for Leadership be affirmed, undergirded by a common leadership framework, with the president appointing a scope and design task group to bring an implementation proposal for reporting by June, 2012 including timeline and funding considerations.

2. That the staffing of the Department of Ordered Ministry be configured to include the regionalization of key responsibilities be affirmed, and that the president and executive minister of ordered ministry convene a task group to develop an implementation strategy for reporting by June, 2012 including timeline and funding considerations.



Start and Strengthen Churches

Key Vision for Starting and Strengthening Churches: For the ECC to grow to 1,000+ congregations; for half of all new churches to be among populations of color or intentionally multi-ethnic, bringing the ECC ethnic and multi-ethnic mosaic of congregations to greater than 30%; for every congregation to be a healthy, missional church.

Key Considerations to Accomplishing the Vision

1. Every conference have direct access to a Director of Church Planting (DCP) and a Director of Congregational Vitality (DCV).
2. Reset shared standards, protocols, and strategies for church planting
3. Need for multiple avenues of church planting and congregational vitality funding resources for sustainable funding across all conferences and ECC.
4. Need to revision long term, sustainable strategies for ethnic and multi-ethnic congregations, particularly in urban and immigrant contexts.

Starting Churches:

Shared between denomination and conference:

- Develop standards for assessing church planters, projects, training, and coaching
- Concurrence on project design, pastor called, and funding schedule in any church planting project
- Funding strategies

Denomination:

- Resourcing and coordinating conference DCPs
- Research and development
- Concurring with conference DCP selection
- Affinity coaching and networks
- Facility location services
- Revenue generation
- Resourcing capital fund drives

Conference:

- Frontend identification of potential church planters
- Developing project design
- Training
- Coaching
- Contextualizing vision
- Revenue generation

Strengthening Churches:

Shared between denomination and conference:

- Develop resources to picture and measure congregational health
- Develop training and coaching resources
- Identify “restart” pastors
- Funding strategies to sustain congregational vitality ministries
- Develop strategy for congregational conflict resolution

Denomination:

- Resourcing and coordinating DCVs
- Research and development for congregational vitality

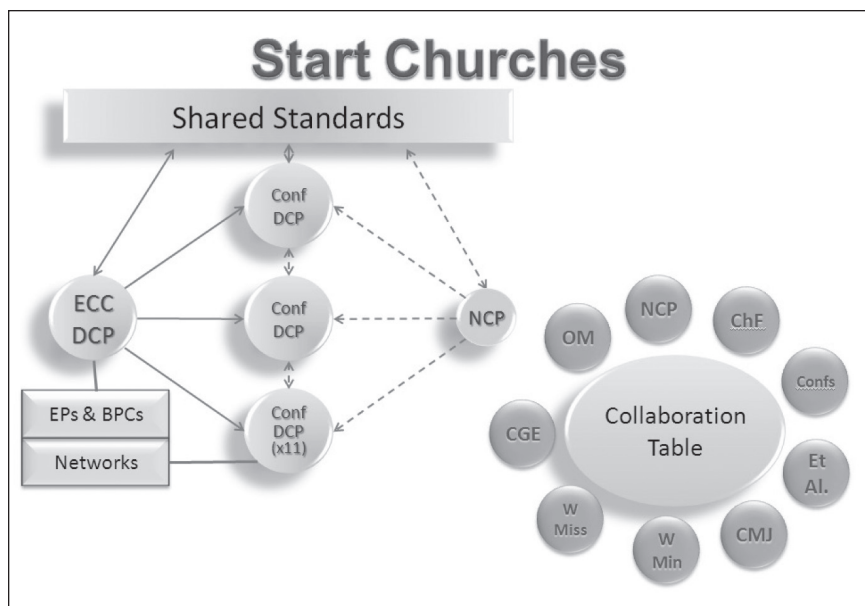
Conference:

- Coaching implementation
- Conflict resources (1st responder)
- Search committee assistance

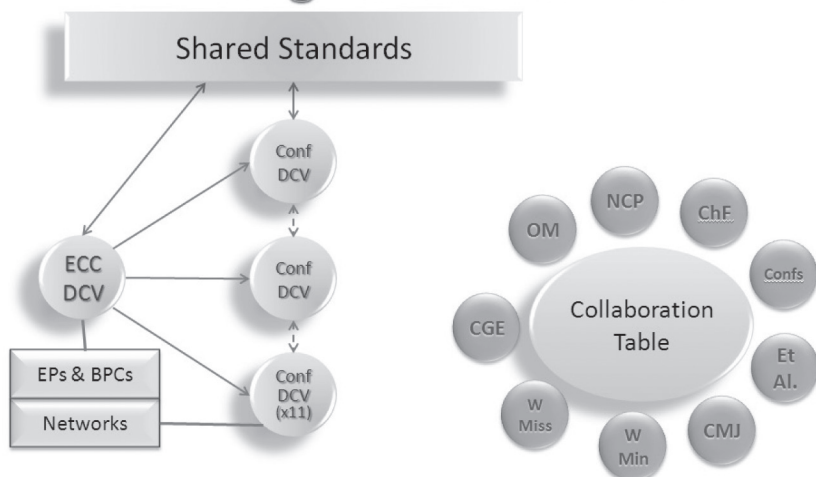
Implementation Recommendations Approved

3. That the standard for every conference to have access to a director of church planting and a director of congregational vitality be adopted, and that the president appoint a task group, in concurrence with the executive minister of CGE and the chair of the council of superintendents, to develop an action plan, including timeline and funding considerations, for review by the council of superintendents by January 2012.

4. That the timeliness of resetting of standards, protocols, and strategies related to church planting be affirmed, and that the president appoint a task group, in concurrence with the executive minister of CGE and the chair of the council of superintendents, to do such with an action plan for review by relevant parties by January 2012.
5. That the need for every conference and the ECC to have sustainable funding for church planting and congregational vitality be affirmed and that the president appoint a task group in concurrence with the executive minister of CGE and chair of the council of superintendents to develop sustainable funding strategies for church planting and congregational vitality across all conferences and the ECC with an action plan for review by the council of superintendents in January 2012.
6. That the need to revision sustainable strategies for ethnic and multi-ethnic congregations, particularly in urban and immigrant contexts, be affirmed, and that the president present this commitment to the Ethnic Commission in November 2011, and from input received establish appropriate task groups with preliminary reporting back by June 2012.
7. That the need to develop a church conflict resolution strategy for serving churches be affirmed and that the president appoint a task force with the concurrence of the executive minister of the ordered ministry and chair of the council of superintendents to explore options with a report for review by the council of superintendents in September 2012.



Strengthen Churches



Make and Deepen Disciples

Key Vision for Making and Deepening Disciples: That the ECC grow to 250,000 in aggregate attendance, with every church seeing people come to faith in Christ every year, and every church having clear pathways and opportunities for every person to deepen faith, nurtured by Covenant identity.

Key Considerations to Accomplishing the Vision

1. Making and deepening disciples is foundational to ECC identity. Capturing intentionality in both evangelism and spiritual growth underpins all that we do; without it all other ministry priorities of starting and strengthening churches, developing leaders, loving mercy-doing justice, and serving globally suffer.
2. The primary responsibility for making and deepening disciples lies in the local church through dimensions such as worship, preaching, teaching, fellowship, service, and mission.
3. There are resources available to congregations through sources other than the ECC
4. There are increasing numbers of full and part time church staff serving in related areas (children, youth, and adult, and worship ministries in particular), resulting in churches being more self-resourced.

Key Functions and Services Summary for Make and Deepen Disciples

Denomination:

1. Communicating vision—painting a picture of what making and deepening disciples looks like in the ECC and how it is accomplished

(principles/pathways/marks/strategies) in an integrated way across ministry priorities.

2. Best practice sharing—working with conferences to identify expert practitioners to provide coaching, and best practice centers that can function as models for others, as well as facilitating ministry idea exchanges.
3. Networks--forming and supporting networks that connect leaders of similar ministries for peer resourcing and support (e.g., worship leaders, youth ministry, camp directors, women ministries, etc).
4. Resource development focused in ECC identity and initiatives.
5. Resource review, recommending ECC-compatible materials developed by other groups (e.g., VBS materials, small group curriculum, etc).

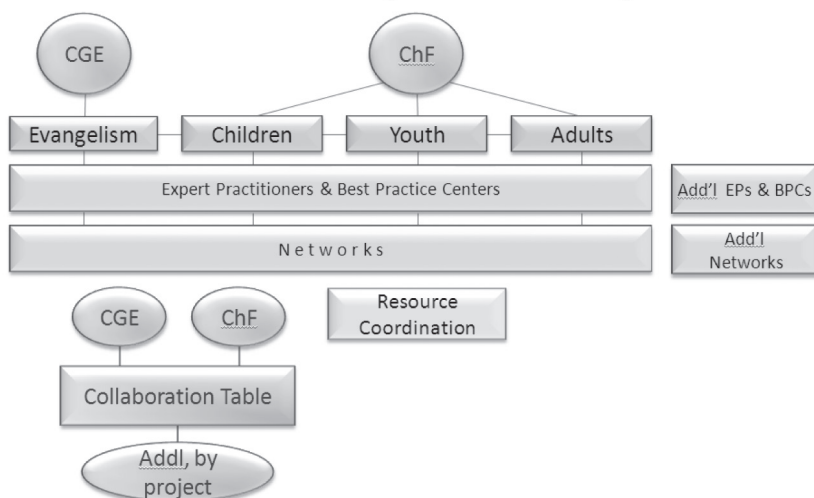
Conference:

1. Communicating vision for making and deepening disciples
2. Work with denomination to identify expert practitioners and best practice centers and connect local churches to such.
3. Point and connect local churches to denominational resources and recommendations.

Implementation Recommendations Approved

8. That the role of expert practitioners, best-practice centers, and practitioner networks be elevated in strategy to take advantage of expertise, proximity, and contextualization within the breadth of the ECC.
9. That the president, in consultation with all of the executive ministers engaging in expert practitioner/best practice center approaches, appoint a task group to establish protocols for identification, standards, training, support, and utilization of such, with a report to the Covenant Offices Leadership Team and Council of Superintendents by January 2012.
10. That resource development focused in ECC identity and initiatives be affirmed, and that the president convene a task group with the executive ministers of communication, Christian formation, and church growth and evangelism to develop a list of projected core resources, with a report to Covenant Offices Leadership Team by March 2012.
11. That resource recommendations and review of materials produced by others be affirmed and that the collaborative table generate a listing of general categories for such action with a report to Covenant Offices Leadership Team by March 2012.

Make and Deepen Disciples



Love Mercy and Do Justice

Key Vision for Loving Mercy and Doing Justice: This area echoes Micah 6:8, where the people of God are called on to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with our God. The key vision for this area is to significantly increase the capacity for regional conferences and local congregations to develop ministries of loving mercy and doing justice (LMDJ), evidenced by every congregation being able to identify and develop its specific ministries in this area as well as through tangible denominationally-wide mobilized ministries.

Key Considerations to Accomplishing the Vision

1. Collaborative structures across all dimensions of the ECC will ensure this biblical and historic emphasis of the ECC will attain key indicators of effectiveness*; responsibility is not localized into a single department or institution.
2. An additional position in the department of compassion, mercy, and justice will enable the mobilization of substantial and tangible love mercy-do justice ministries across the denomination, conferences, and churches.
3. Direct collaboration between the department of compassion, mercy, and justice and Covenant Initiatives for Care (a subsidiary of Covenant Ministries of Benevolence), will increase the mobilization of substantial and tangible love mercy-do justice ministries across the denomination, conferences, and churches.

*OFM Key Indicators of Effectiveness:

1. Local churches will identify and develop specific and tangible LMDJ ministries.
2. Every church will engage in a full array of outreach--evangelism, church planting, LMDJ, and global connection.
3. We will mobilize denomination-wide to develop collective LMDJ ministries.
4. There will be increasing numbers of multiethnic and socio-economically diverse churches.
5. Churches will recognize and call out systemic injustice and take tangible steps towards making things right.
6. Every conference will develop a mosaic immersion experience helping people relate to and understand people of different ethnicities and class in their regional context.
7. Discussions of compassion, mercy, and justice issues will be biblically-rooted rather than politically-driven, aspirational, and point to real changes in people and communities.
8. A formal process will be developed to enable Covenant leadership to name and address internal and organizational issues of justice.
9. There will be a common language for LMDJ.
10. There will be collaborative and integrative structures to connect LMDJ with the core ministries of start and strengthen churches, make and deepen disciples; develop leaders; and serve globally.

Key Functions and Services for Loving Mercy and Doing Justice

Denomination:

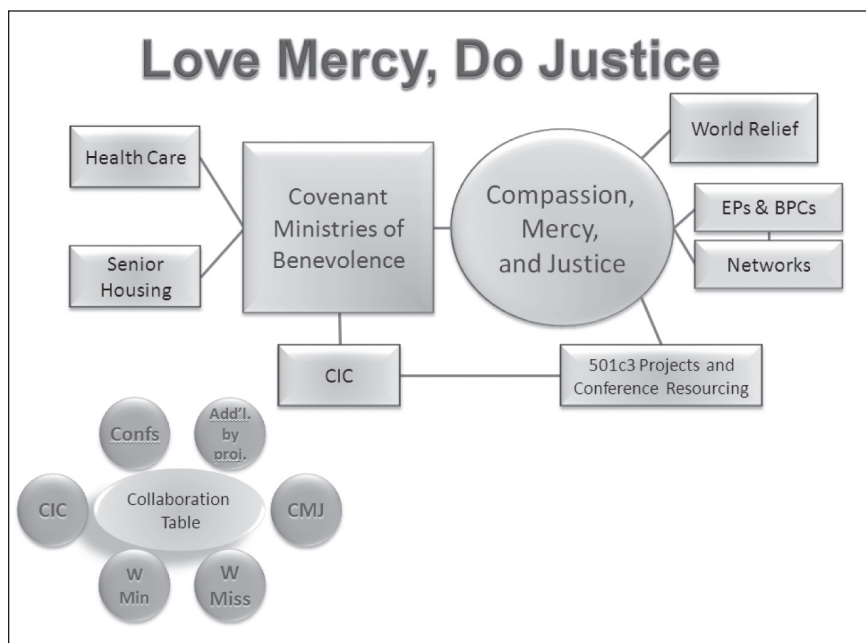
1. Develop resources and training materials in collaboration with conferences and local churches.
2. Identify and facilitate "big initiatives" (e.g., Matthew/Micah) that can be done on a collective, denomination-wide basis.
3. Coordinate LMDJ ministries across departments and institutions.
4. Develop national and international partnerships.
5. Develop a communication strategy in collaboration with other departments and institutions.
6. Convene "Covenant leaders group" at regular intervals to identify and address internal and organizational issues of justice.
7. Teaching and preaching prophetically on loving mercy and doing justice.

Conference:

1. Connect resources and training to local churches in collaboration with CMJ.
2. Consult with and coach local churches in LMDJ ministry initiatives.
3. Work with CMJ to network and connect LMDJ practitioners, advocates, and champions.
4. Develop local and regional partnerships for collective initiatives.
5. Teaching and preaching prophetically on loving mercy and doing justice.

Implementation Recommendations Approved

12. That an additional position in the department of compassion, mercy, justice be affirmed focusing on the mobilization of tangible love mercy-do justice ministries in support of conference and local church efforts, with the aim of having the position filled by Feb 1, 2012.
13. That the advantage of direct collaboration between the department of compassion, mercy, and justice and Covenant Initiatives for Care be affirmed; and that the two entities identify a defined set of tangible love mercy-do justice ministry initiatives supporting the mobilization of conferences and churches, with a recommendation including timeline and funding considerations to their respective boards by March 2012.
14. That networks of expert practitioners and best practice centers be mobilized by joint efforts between conferences and the department of compassion, mercy, and justice with a report back by June 2012.



Serve Globally

Key Vision for Serving Globally: That the global whole-gospel impact of the ECC increase to more than one million lives through the continued sending of missionaries, the strengthening of partner national churches, directed attention to focused initiatives, and enhanced support to self-initiated congregational international undertakings; that the global identity and partnership among ECC-related national churches be nurtured.

Key Considerations to Accomplishing the Vision

1. That serving globally is about the international implementation of the other stated priorities: to start and strengthen churches, to make and deepen disciples, to develop leaders, and to love mercy-do justice.
2. That the continued calling and sending of missionaries remains an integral part of our collective efforts.
3. That strengthening national churches and national leaders through missiologically-sound partnerships is integral to the long term vitality and sustainability of work in any location.
4. That within maintaining a complement of international partnerships and missionary placement, the ECC engage national churches to identify particular countries, areas of expertise, and compelling opportunities that deepen and focus impact.
5. That given the access available to local congregations to be directly involved in self-initiated international opportunities, the ECC come alongside such congregations to coach for effectiveness and network among common interests.

Key Functions and Services Summary for Serve Globally

Denomination:

- Casting vision and telling the story
- Missionary screening, placement, and support
- Connecting congregations to support missionaries
- Development of major initiatives
- Support of local church initiatives through networking and coaching
- Catalytic role with global partners
- Link US/Canada mosaic with global mosaic, finding cross-pathways of mission and ministry
- Funding streams and models
- Administration/Finance

Conference:

- Communicating vision for serving globally
- Identifying networking opportunities for support of ECC mission and local church initiatives
- Assistance with periodic special projects

Implementation Recommendations Approved

15. That the structure of the department of world mission include support for focused major initiatives, and that the president and executive minister convene a task group to develop an implementation strategy for reporting by June, 2012 including timeline and funding considerations.
16. That the structure of the Department of World Mission be configured to include the regionalization of personnel with key responsibilities to both support local church global initiatives and to engage local churches in the support of ECC opportunities; and that the president and executive minister convene a task group to develop an action plan for such by June 2012, including timeline and funding considerations.
17. That the executive minister engage international partner churches to ascertain interest in heightened engagement among all parties through a global network of ECC-related bodies.



Christian Reformed Church in North America Our Five Streams

(Denominational Priorities)

Faith Formation	Servant Leadership	Global Missions	Loving Mercy; Doing Justice	Gospel Proclamation and Worship
<p>As a community of believers we seek to introduce and nurture faith in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>We believe the church must work together to challenge and equip each believer to grow in their faith as they seek to be faithful disciples in the kingdom of God.</p>	<p>We seek to identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God.</p> <p>We believe the lifelong equipping of all leaders is essential for the flourishing of churches and ministries.</p>	<p>We are a missional community with a kingdom vision.</p> <p>Therefore, we seek to be witnesses and agents of the kingdom "to the ends of the earth."</p> <p>Our primary objective is to start and strengthen local churches, both in North America and around the world.</p>	<p>We hear the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged.</p> <p>Our hearts are broken by the things that break the heart of God.</p> <p>Therefore we seek "to act justly and love mercy" as we walk humbly with our God.</p>	<p>Faith comes through the hearing of God's Word.</p> <p>We seek to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and worship him in all that we do.</p>

Note: Each *stream* or priority is to be supported by a "collaboration table" of representatives of select ministries and/or institutions within the CRCNA for the purpose of advancing the respective *stream* within the denomination.

Appendix C

Glossary of Terms

Administration includes those administrative functions and staff within the denominational office that *support* ministries and programs managed by the denomination. These functions can include human resources, information technology, corporate communications, facilities, financial management, fleet, and, in some cases, corporate policy and planning. Depending on the mandate of *administration*, these functions can provide a valuable service by providing a unifying force within the organization, and working collaboratively with ministries, programs, and partners in developing common goals for the betterment of the organization (e.g., cost reduction measures).

Binationality: The CRCNA is a Reformed denomination that operates in the United States and Canada. The CRCNA values being a binational denomination for the opportunity it provides to combine pursuit of a common mission with an intentional and meaningful engagement with different national, regional, and local contexts for ministry. Binationality in the CRCNA fosters a culture of gracious space that encourages different expressions of common convictions to achieve common goals of meaningful witness and effective, holistic ministry in different contexts. Intentional recognition of commonalities and significant differences allows adequate flexibility in leadership, structures, and policies to respond to each national context as well as regional, local, and ethnic contexts.

Collaboration is the step beyond cooperation and coordination. Collaboration is the commitment of the organization and its leaders to a common mission, common goals, and to one or more projects undertaken for longer-term results.

Core values succinctly describe how the CRC *applies* Christian, organizational, and professional ethics with its staff and congregations and within their working environments. These values apply to all within the organization and are relevant to the conduct and manner in which individuals live, apply themselves, or interact with each other and with stakeholders. In healthy organizations, these values are normally displayed under core value statements, social charters, or ethic codes and are shared and modeled by leaders, staff, and volunteers.

Culture is defined by the church's values, norms, rituals (processes and practices), organizational beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors. Often these are the unspoken "rules" that are hidden from outsiders and refer to the patterned ways in which staff, trustees, synod, and congregations interact, both physically and socially. They include the deeper and underlying understandings that drive organizational behavior within the denomination. This interaction can often be defined by the culture and values that already exist within the organization and can be understood at both formal and informal levels.

Governance is defined as the act of governing. Within a denomination, governance relates to how the denominational *leadership* generally manages

the affairs, issues, congregational needs, ministries, and programs within an existing *structure* and *culture*. Good governance sets the environment whereby leaders can provide consistent and cohesive management, prioritization, policies, guidance, processes, monitoring, collaboration, and decision making that serve to nurture the spiritual needs and communal welfare of congregations, congregational members, and the communities they serve within the context of furthering the Lord's kingdom.

Leadership (and **Leaders**) provides the critical link between the organization's structure and culture and includes any person who serves in a leadership capacity, including senior staff (or management) within the denominational offices, the Board of Trustees, synod, classes, and the leaders within individual congregations. They are generally responsible for the *overall* oversight and management of the denomination, including the various ministries, administrative units, and congregations. They are usually responsible for the direction of the denomination as a whole. Leadership shapes (and is shaped by) the mission, vision, and culture within a defined organizational structure. Leadership is often defined by the level of skills or competencies consistent with the ability to lead.

Effective Christian leadership is the process of helping a group embody in its corporate life the practices that shape vital Christian life, community, and witness in ways that are faithful to Jesus Christ and the gospel, and that are appropriate to a particular group's setting, resources, vision, and purpose (taken from "Leadership: A Working Definition" from the Leadership Development Team of the CRCNA, May 2004, p. 9).

Management includes senior management, executive(s), executive team, or management team. They are individuals or a team of individuals at the highest level of denominational management, including those in agencies, ministries, or specialized programs. They normally hold specific authority conferred to them by the executive director, Board of Trustees, or synod and are responsible for the day-to-day activities of the organization.

Mission (and **Mission statement**) describes in one brief sentence the aim(s) of the CRC and why it exists (e.g., to create and sustain healthy congregations). It can sometimes describe how it provides value to congregations and stakeholders. It needs to be simple and understood by a twelve-year-old. It does not include *theological beliefs*, but is expected to be guided by them.

Participatory training is training by which management includes team members in discussions and decisions related to defined objectives of the agency or organization as a way to broaden decision making and agreement.

Social structure refers to the patterned ways in which individuals and units within the organization interact. This interaction is largely defined by the culture that exists in the organization. It can be understood at both formal and informal levels, is often shaped by authority or power, the division of labor or role differentiation, and formal rule and procedures.

Strategic planning (and the associated **Ministry Plan**) includes the process to understand the denomination's mission, vision, and values, expected outcomes and "how to get there." It includes at a minimum the following:

- **an environmental scan** (the CRC's current realities, both internal and external and associated potential impacts)
- five to seven **key goals**
- **strategies** (or specific actions) to be taken under each goal to reach the vision
- **performance indicators** to measure success

For the Plan to be successful (i.e., *successful outcomes* or vision nearly accomplished), the process and Plan must be owned by everyone in the CRC and assimilated into the denomination's culture.

Theological statement(s) describes one's deepest belief and reason for being.

Vision (and **vision statement**) describes in one statement what the CRC wants to be—or "what it wants to be when it grows up," or "how it wants the world/society in which it operates to be"—a desired state. It concentrates on the future and the ideal in God's kingdom. It is often meant to be a source of inspiration for staff, stakeholders, and others to a future that is much bigger than its current state (e.g., transformed lives and communities). Vision is a picture of a preferred future. It is intended to serve as a clear guide in choosing the current and future course of action.

Concerns and Options/Considerations

Structure, Culture, and Leadership

from Listening Tables (2011),
Staff Survey (2012), and Task Force Input (2012)

Concerns	Options/Considerations
Structure	
<p>The structure and culture of the CRCNA is generally considered a hindrance in growing the church and its ministries.</p> <p>The CRCNA operates largely as autonomous agencies and ministries—in part due to our history, culture, structure, and leadership. A “confederacy of nonprofits” versus a “union of ministries.”</p> <p>Conflict of interests between agency boards, agency directors, and central administration (DO) are contributing to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a very complex organization • collaboration issues • competition and division • communication issues • under-represented specialized ministries • funding distribution issues <p>There are growing signs that the CRCNA is in fact a postdenominational “federation” of congregations and ministries.</p>	<p>Be open to “grassroots” committees and groups among agencies and ministries—formal or informal.</p> <p>Some considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation of boards or not to consolidate. • Fewer boards or one board. • Change mandate of agency boards to advisory committees of the BOT. • Ministry Council should be the binding agent for integration. • Representative(s) from each board/ministry would be part of the BOT. • Combine mission agencies into <i>Council of Executive Ministries</i> to enable long-term vision and collaboration. • Find ways to unify the ministries of our denomination under a more common vision. Current structures of different agencies are seen as competing with each other for finances and, in some cases, volunteers.

Lack of clarity regarding lines of authority and strategic authority in the structure makes for barriers that have contributed to the organization being less innovative, creative, collaborative, and visionary.

Structure does not allow CRCNA to deliver easily on our priority of healthy congregations and has in some cases prohibited us from being the nimble and cohesive organization the churches need.

“Things don’t always get done” in the CRCNA because there is red tape and bureaucracy.

Is classis the best link between synod and local congregations? What is needed to ensure that local congregations are connected and responsive to the work of synod and the organization and vice versa?

Much of our current structure is organized by geography rather than function.

The CRCNA models a hierarchical structure (in terms of positional authority) rather than a structure devoted to servant leadership dedicated to congregations and staff.

Structure, role, and participation in decision making are not well understood by staff.

The Board of Trustees and the Denominational Office largely operate as a management board rather than as a strategic board.

Structure is not aligned to embrace people of other color and ethnicities.

- Integrate specialized ministries within one agency (i.e., Home Missions).
- Reorganize the BOT to be representative of advisory committees for each agency and specialized ministries.

A “charter” outlining clear authorities and decision-making processes among ministries, BOT, Denominational Office, and synod.

Restructure to combine all supports for congregations under one department and/or agency with one director who has vision for congregational development.

Develop a structure in which different ideas of mission can flourish under a single denominational banner.

Review/redefine/repurpose synod to take into account at least the existence of the CRCNA Board of Trustees as the entity that handles almost all of the governance tasks done previously by synod.

Strengthen our equivalent of middle judicatories (i.e., CRC classes).

Develop a regional services delivery system to churches through a team-based approach.

A regional approach to delivery of services to congregations needs better agency collaboration. Home Missions has a regional team system to service local churches, but there is little collaboration with specialized agencies, especially when much of this work is based on relationships within the region. Where collaboration has occurred, it has worked well.

Binationality is becoming a growing issue for the organization and congregations in Canada. Increased sensitivity to Canada's "back room" role in terms of leadership, relevancy, and innovation is contributing to a very real dissatisfaction. This appears to be having some unintended and negative consequences for a cohesive organization.

Our congregations may be distancing themselves from us as an organization—our service to them is not what it ought to be or could be.

Churches do not feel connected to the mission work of the denomination—they have chosen to seek out their own mission opportunities or enter into partnerships with non-CRCNA mission organizations. Dealing with CRCNA agencies for mission work is too complex, with too many restrictions and policies—and the process is too time consuming.

An institutional arrogance that surfaces from time to time—reflected in attitudes that suggest we know how to do something better than the churches or members do—if only they would learn from us or listen to us.

Scorecard and *Dashboard* metrics are not always useful in fulfilling the strategic objectives of the organization.

The denomination could provide training and resourcing to create better local/regional resources—do preventative work versus putting out fires (conflicts).

Organizing by function—church planting, discipleship, and so forth—would make us more efficient.

Organize functionally. Try to grasp what it means to demonstrate servant leadership. Turn organizational structure chart upside down.

Revive strategic planning as ongoing process at level of changing context, challenges, and opportunities, leading to agreement on strategies coordinated by BOT and the Denominational Office and implemented by agencies and ministries.

Rethink how we embrace diversity and employment equity.

Dismantle the binational structure. The structure from an operational management and governance perspective is awkward, ineffective, and cumbersome.

Decentralize the binational structure further so that the denominational structure is closer and more relevant to Canadian churches—regional synods.

Allow Canadian board members to also meet separately with a view to the church's common vision, focusing on the Canadian context and ministries.

Consider a dual leadership role between Canada and the United States.

There is overlap in many places, and we need to find a structure that will help us put components together in meaningful ways (e.g., leadership development, healthy church, or classis renewal desperately need components from Social Justice, Race Relations, Disability Concerns, Safe Church, and so forth). Right now there seems to be no structure to embed these critical components into places where they are needed.

Learn from Canada on collaborative management and leadership styles.

Look at our present structure in light of irreversible trends, including

- people embracing other cultures and denominations because of information technology and globalization.
- the way people are increasingly challenging the role and value of institutions. Denominational loyalty is definitely on the wane.
- a move from general financial giving out of institutional loyalty to giving for specific high-impact causes or projects.
- the changing perception of the role of clergy and the change in understanding of Christian laypeople who are learning to integrate their faith into every aspect of their lives.
- the diminished role of youth in the church—they want a meaningful and active role now.

Consider what kinds of support churches are looking for. In many cases they are looking for things they cannot do on their own (e.g., World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and World Renew) or something to help address a specific issue at the church (e.g., faith formation, worship, how to respond to a changing community, and so forth). Can the denominational structure change to be more responsive by thinking in broad categories?

	<p>Design an agency or office to support and lead congregations in the areas of life and ministry in which they are most engaged on a daily basis—discipleship, including faith formation for youth and adults, worship, adult education, and leadership development.</p> <p>Require the denomination to ask the local churches what they want the denomination to be and do for them.</p> <p>Review <i>Scorecard</i> and <i>Dashboard</i> processes and metrics to re-align with strategic priorities and expected outcomes.</p>
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Culture

<p>The CRCNA has subcultures within its organization (among leaders, ministries, agencies, other parts of the world).</p> <p>Newcomers and new congregations do not readily embrace the culture of the CRCNA and fit in.</p> <p>Norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions in the CRCNA (as a binational church) are generally not the same in the United States as they are in Canada.</p> <p>The CRCNA does not do well in developing itself through strategic decision making and planning versus maintaining itself and its existing programs.</p>	<p>Develop a culture of “external adaption” and “internal integration.”</p> <p>Create better awareness and training in managing complexity—learn to work with tensions and promote collaboration.</p> <p>Examine culture change, then leadership, then structure (all are inextricably linked) through a comprehensive strategic planning process.</p> <p>Share the vision.</p> <p>There is a need to clearly articulate our <i>culture</i> in two value statements—one for the work environment within the denominational</p>
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The CRCNA is not adapting readily to the changing environment in its congregations (across North America and globally) and our society.

Conflict is generally not dealt with swiftly or managed effectively.

The CRCNA lacks a customer service culture. This is partly due to differing views about who the *customer* is—in cross-agency collaborative efforts. In reality, the *customer* is always the congregation, the church, and individual member.

Who is the employer—the agency or the denomination? Currently, the prevailing sentiment would point to the agency as the employer.

There is reluctance to embrace what is already out there—we would rather create our own resources. This is not wise stewardship.

CRCNA has a task-oriented culture and less of a culture that focuses on learning, innovation, and collaboration.

The nature of communication is “to”—not “with.” Very few opportunities for collaboration—for staff to contribute their ideas for improvements, implementation of existing directions, collaborative projects, and so forth.

Communication is inadequate and does not flow freely—not a culture of information sharing.

Decisions are not always fully explained to staff or to the local congregations.

offices, and a second for our relationship with congregations. Write them down, educate staff, and have leaders model them.

Consider the priority for the new Executive Director for the next few years invoking “cultural change.”

Communicate . . . communicate, and . . . communicate.

Increase communication significantly between the offices in Palos Heights, Burlington, and Grand Rapids.

Encourage many more informal connections to peers in other agencies and ministries rather than mandated committees.

There is potential for social events, cross-agency devotions, and other strategies to build bridges between staff of different agencies and ministries, color, and race. Celebrate diversity in ethos and with passion. Incorporate devotions that infuse justice and race relations.

Foster awareness and training in managing complexity—learn to work with tensions and promote collaboration.

Encourage the Executive Director and senior executives to spend more time interacting with staff, recognizing and encouraging employees, exchanging ideas and dialoguing.

Consider a newly established Staff Advisory Group on Workplace Environment to advise the Executive Director. Develop a culture of listening.

Each agency has its own personality and culture—each works and uses its authority differently.

A collaborative culture within the defined structure is not natural to the CRCNA in Grand Rapids, resulting in

- obstacles in moving ideas with merit through the organization.
- lack of collaborative coordination—Ministry Council abandoned.
- collaborative efforts made in meetings with little follow-up and accountability.
- duplication of services and efforts.
- criticism rather than experimentation and innovation.
- culture of silence.

More collaboration is needed on the “playing field” or through informal means. The specialized ministries and agencies more closely connected to congregations tend to collaborate more successfully (e.g., World Missions and Home Missions). The Canadian office tends to collaborate well.

There is a visible lack of trust between the Denominational Office and the ministries. The tendency of ministries and agencies is to resist authority structures.

2850 fosters

- division rather than cross-agency and ministry exchange and collaboration.
- a noticeable “upper floor” authority structure.

Success is celebrated—staff that come together around a common passion connect well.

Become a “restorative denomination” that educates and trains all church leaders (and members) to incorporate restorative values (i.e., mutual respect, accountability, support, listening) and practices that result in the transformation of the meeting process and the empowerment of all participants.

Encourage staff to be *outcome-oriented* and not just task-oriented.

Internal collaboration of programs and resources offered to churches *needs* to happen because the church is getting “similar items” from different agencies and ministries. The churches wonder, “Don’t they ever talk to each other in the denominational offices?”

Communication would become a key role in an organic movement. Expand to use all types of communication—text, Tweet, Facebook, network, letter, Skype, and so forth.

Support gatherings—bringing people together around shared ministry is very important. Face to face is still the best way to build relationships.

It is extremely important to get women, people of color, and young adults in positions of leadership (both structurally and culturally, via voice) rather than the “old white males” that currently lead.

Enhance platforms for partnerships with churches on specific projects. Fine-tune ways to invite them to adopt specific projects for prayer and support.

The *Canadian Collaboration Task Force* has had some success. Unfortunately, there is no one position in the current structure that

The Denominational Office is producing information that no one is asking for, and that leaves precious little time to listen for what is really needed in our churches.

Diversity is a challenge that the organization needs to embrace.

There are competing value systems throughout the organization.

Outside organizations see the CRCNA as professional, committed, and organized.

The offices of Race Relations, Disability Concerns, and Safe Church are perceived by other churches as models.

can speak on behalf of all the Canadian agencies to champion this across the country. As a result, agencies operate on their default mode—championing their agency objectives.

Conduct a *Wilder Research Collaboration Factors Survey* among agencies, denominational offices, and local churches—use Mission Insite studies to generate collaborative ministries between agencies and local churches.

Develop a more open culture that encourages and even rewards collaboration (e.g., World Renew is a good model and an inspiration showing how more ministry gets done when we work together in collaboration with others toward common goals).

If the denominational strategic plan is aligned with the needs and desires of the local congregations, then we will all be working on the same objectives with a correct allocation of responsibility. Dwight Eisenhower once said, “Plans are nothing; planning is everything.” It is important to be together with our congregations as much as possible when planning takes place.

Leadership

Leaders, for the most part, *do not invite* diversity of ideas, responses, or disagreement where appropriate.

Leaders do not appear to encourage creativity, innovation, and cross-agency/ministry experimentation.

The CRC is a very complex organization. We need a new kind of executive leadership that is able to navigate through these com-

increase the role of Executive Director as “vision-caster” for all internal staff and the churches—be clear on the position’s role.

Significantly increase the role of BOT in strategic management and planning, using the Executive Director and the Denominational Office staff as key resources.

<p>plexities. However, our history of choosing good pastors to these leadership positions with a proven track record to lead complex organizations has not been good at all.</p> <p>Leadership does not appear to use ideas presented by others.</p> <p>The balance between the outside role of the Executive Director as ambassador for the CRC and the internal role of staff leadership is not clear.</p> <p>Clarity from leadership about decision making at any particular level is not clear.</p> <p>The CRC lacks a <i>unifying</i> vision. Staff do not understand how the local efforts fit into the broader picture and continually look to leadership for the answers.</p> <p>There is lack of internal discussions about issues being discussed by leaders with BOT (such as diversity).</p> <p>Leaders are not physically present to other parts of the building.</p> <p>Succession planning—the organization lacks an intentional way of developing and promoting young leaders.</p> <p>The pastoral care for employees and flexibility to deal with personal health issues is good.</p>	<p>We need proactive leadership to build trust, collaboration, and support for innovation.</p> <p>Leaders need to ensure that staff have appropriate input into policy changes that affect their work.</p> <p>Need an ombudsperson's office to handle complaints to free the ED to focus on vision casting, strategic planning, and communication.</p> <p>Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for developing leaders for the entire organization.</p> <p>The Denominational Office and agencies need to send representatives to <i>listen</i>, not to defend or promote the denomination but to get a sense of what lives in the grassroots of the denomination.</p> <p>For the next full-time ED, assign the following five top priorities within the first two years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the BOT in leading kingdom visioning and a strategic planning process. • Integrate internally and adapt (adopt) externally. • Focus and manage current complexity of the organization and issues. • Put meaningful structures in place to initiate and maintain culture shift, integration of ministries, and clear decision-making processes within a collaborative structure. • Communicate more frequently and openly with staff. <p>There is need for training for all staff in “servant leadership.”</p>
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OVERTURES, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PERSONAL APPEAL

Overture 1: Permit the Transfer of Urim CRC of Lake Forest, California, to Classis Pacific Hanmi

Classis California South overtures synod to transfer the Urim Christian Reformed Church of Lake Forest, California, from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi. This transfer has been requested by the church and approved by both Classis California South and Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Ground: Belonging to Classis Pacific Hanmi will result in enhanced communication by minimizing the language barrier.

Classis California South
William Verhoef, stated clerk

Overture 2: Approve the Transfer of Urim CRC in Lake Forest, California, from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi

Classis Pacific Hanmi overtures Synod 2013 to approve the transfer of Urim Christian Reformed Church from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Grounds:

1. Classis Pacific Hanmi has approved the transfer of Urim CRC from Classis California South at their February 2013 meeting, contingent upon the completion of future transfer procedures from Classis California South and the synodical office.
2. The Urim CRC leadership have been participating in the Classis Pacific Hanmi meetings and events as informal members and contributing significantly.
3. Classis California South has approved the transfer of Urim CRC to Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Classis Pacific Hanmi
Jang Ho Park, stated clerk

Overture 3: Create a New Classis in Michigan

I. Background

In 2009 Classis Grand Rapids North began to allow the seating of women delegates at classis. Trinity CRC, Sparta, prayerfully sought a wise, orderly, and peaceful solution to the conflict this made with their biblical convictions. Classis advised Trinity CRC to attend classis under protest. Although they appreciated classis's advice and respect for Trinity CRC, they did not find going to classis under protest when women delegates were seated to be a healthy solution to their dilemma. Trinity CRC does not wish to cause unnecessary discomfort to others who think very differently than they do on the biblical qualifications for offices in the church. Further, they do not wish to be unduly distracted by this issue as they continue with the unity and blessings enjoyed in their local congregation, with men and women using their gifts and callings in complementary ways.

In 2010 Classis Grand Rapids North respectfully and pastorally approved the Trinity CRC overture to transfer to Classis Minnkota, which does not allow the seating of women delegates and which received the transfer of First CRC, Prinsburg, Minnesota, on the same grounds (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 618). Classis Minnkota agreed to receive the transfer of Trinity CRC upon approval by Synod 2010. Synod 2010 did not accede to the advisory committee's majority recommendation to approve the transfer, but did direct the executive director of the CRCNA and Dr. Henry De Moor to help two churches (Trinity CRC and Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Mich.) find a way forward (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 891).

Trinity CRC was grateful for the assistance of the former executive director, Rev. Gerard Dykstra. Progress was hindered, however, upon the sudden resignation of Rev. Dykstra. When Rev. Joel Boot was approved as interim executive director (Synod 2011), Trinity CRC communicated with him the progress made thus far. Rev. Boot and Dr. Henry De Moor have given helpful advice in seeking to find a classis in geographical proximity that does not allow the seating of women delegates.

Having researched and communicated with several classes (Grandville, Thornapple Valley, Grand Rapids South, Zeeland, Georgetown, Chicago South, Illiana), it has become clear that there is no classis in the Michigan area that allows only qualified male delegates which will welcome Trinity CRC. Trinity CRC appreciates and concurs with the advice of Classis Illiana's Interim Committee in a January 30, 2012, letter addressing the concerns of several churches seeking affiliation, copied to Rev. Boot and Dr. De Moor, stating,

In our opinion, the best solution would be for synod to allow these churches to form the beginning of a new classis, and then allow the other churches to affiliate with them if that is their desire. We respect both sides of this issue and think that there should be a clear and sensible way in which these churches can remain faithful and active within the Christian Reformed Church.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2013 to direct the Board of Trustees to help establish a new classis in the Michigan area in accordance with Church Order Article 39. The purpose for this would be to

create a classis in which churches whose convictions do not allow women to serve in the offices of the church to participate freely.

Grounds:

1. Trinity CRC, Sparta, Michigan, in good faith has sought out every possibility of transferring to another classis in its geographical area, and none can be found that do not allow the seating of women delegates which will welcome them. Some have the position of male-only delegates on the books (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 610), but in practice there are exceptions, or fears to even bring up the matter because of past conflicts or painful memories of church splits over this issue. Trinity CRC has never wanted to cause unnecessary discomfort over this issue to an existing classis by way of transfer. Synods 1995, 2000, 2006, and 2007 have made provision for the classical/local option.
2. Several churches (10-12) have expressed their desire for such a classis as a better option than remaining in a classis where they function in conflict with their biblical convictions and under registered protest. This classis would be for churches committed to remaining Christian Reformed and holding to the position that only qualified male members may serve in the offices of minister, elder, and deacon (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 731-35).
3. Church Order Article 39 allows for such a classis. "The desirability of organizing a new classis depends on the consideration of the number of families, the number of congregations, the geographical distances, the effectiveness of ministry and other factors" (*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government: 2001 Revision*, p. 246 [emphasis added]). Both the "effectiveness of ministry" and "other factors" are valid grounds for this classis. Churches which cannot attend their classis because of their biblical convictions cannot be as effective in ministry as they want to be on the classical level. Providing a classis in which such churches can serve within a diverse denomination insures both a mutual respect for opposing positions and a more realistic unity and walking together denominationally. Given the past history of this issue having caused painful splits, such an affinity classis is worth the support of the denomination and should be considered an important "other factor" for organizing this new classis.

Classis Illiana's Interim Committee recommended a new classis as the best solution for our churches (January 30, 2012, letter addressing the concerns of churches seeking affiliation, copied to Rev. Joel Boot and Dr. Henry De Moor).

This classis will send delegates to synod, because the CRCNA has only one synod, whereas it provides options for transfer to another classis or for organizing a new classis.

4. We realize that starting a new classis on the ground of theological affinity is weighty and should be done with extreme care, wisdom, and patience. The CRCNA has two opposing positions regarding women serving in the ordained offices, calling for mutual respect and honor.

Synod 1996 did not accede to an overture for a new classis based on theological affinity because of concerns about further fragmentation within the denomination, impairing effective ministry, and, while

recognizing that transfer to another classis is an option, not wanting a church to decide all by itself to change from one classis to another (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 560-61). Fifteen years later, significant change has taken place at the classical level. Some classes have gone on record allowing qualified men and women to serve as delegates. Some classes have gone on record allowing only qualified men to serve as delegates. Synod has allowed some churches to transfer to other classes on both sides of this theological issue without further fragmenting the denomination. Sadly, several congregations have split or left the denomination, which is precisely the fragmentation we don't want. Because this issue has deep-rooted convictions on both sides, realistic unity and mutual respect can be effectively achieved by providing a theological classis for churches serving in the denomination without having to register a protest for their biblical convictions. Trinity CRC itself has stated, "We do not want a church to decide all by itself to change from one classis to another, and that is why we have patiently and prayerfully sought the collective wisdom of other churches, classes, synod, the executive director, and others."

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 4: Direct the Board of Trustees to Facilitate the Establishment of a New Classis in Michigan and to Permit the Transfer of Second CRC from Classis Kalamazoo to the New Classis

I. A brief history

For over thirty years, from 1977 to 2007, our denominational synods have gone back and forth regarding the reading of the biblical qualifications for officebearers. In this divergence of opinion, many held firmly to the conviction that the Bible specifies that the offices of minister, elder, and deacon be held by qualified males only. Others claimed that in the name of equality, justice, and sensitivity, women were just as qualified and ought to be granted equal status in these positions of leadership. In 1995 our synod sought to put an end to the back and forth debate and reached a compromise solution, saying "that synod recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 727).

Synods 2000, 2006, and 2007 revisited the question, each time granting more latitude to those who favored the women-in-office opinion. Synod 2006 decided to open all of the offices to women and added the instruction that our denomination be granted a seven-year moratorium to grant a time for adjustment and healing. However, Synod 2007 ignored this request. Because many strong voices argued in the name of equality and justice that this freedom to serve ought to be granted to women, Synod 2007 declared the decision to be effective immediately.

This decision meant that all of the various classes within the CRC were automatically granted the right to seat women at their assemblies, unless a

specific classis voted not to delegate women on the basis of biblical convictions. On the floor of synod, it was articulated that for those churches which believed this decision of Synod 2007 to be unbiblical or wrong, there were four options open for them to pursue:

- Go along with this decision, acquiescing to the majority vote, in the name of harmony and unity.
- Attend their local classis meetings “under written protest.”
- Seek realignment and transfer to a CRC classis of like mind.
- Leave the CRC in favor of another denomination.

II. Initial response

In the summer of 2007, the council of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, grappled, pondered, and prayed earnestly for the Lord’s guidance in view of these implications. In view of the decision of Synod 2007, in view of some churches in Classis Kalamazoo desiring to immediately delegate women to classis, and in view of Synod 2007 having granted those churches that privilege effective immediately, the Second CRC council made a decision to abstain from attending Classis Kalamazoo and to pursue a realignment with a classis of like mind. It was sensed that to “attend classis under protest,” would soon become a mere formality, and would merely function as acquiescence to the majority voices in conflict with our reading of Scripture and in violation of conscience. This council also was convinced that to go to classis and to continually keep voicing the conviction of objections to the seating of women would soon be viewed as being a “thorn in the side of classis” or worse, of being contentious, which the Bible forbids. In contrast, it was decided that Second CRC pursue realignment with another classis of like mind, since that option was sanctioned by synod and had many instances of precedent.

III. In the process

In the fall of 2007, the council of Second CRC appointed a realignment committee to do the careful and diligent work of pre-scouting which neighboring classis would be the most receptive and the most harmonious with similar understanding of Scripture. From the fall of 2007 to the autumn of 2008, conversations were held with representatives of ten different classes to compare notes regarding how they were reacting to the dilemmas as a result of the decisions of Synod 2007. Analysis at that time revealed that four classes in the immediate proximity did not practice the seating of women at classis meetings.

In the summer of 2008, Second CRC council was approached by the council of Trinity CRC in Sparta, Michigan, asking if they could join in the search for a new classical realignment since they were facing the same conflict of conscience within Classis Grand Rapids North.

During this time, various Michigan churches were considering the possibility of starting a new classis within the CRC of like-minded churches which held to the time-honored position in this matter—this biblical interpretation that had been held without question in our denomination for almost 150 years. Since synod had said numerous times that both positions were considered “equally valid,” these churches are not asking for a change in theology.

They only want to remain consistent with the reading of Holy Scripture and to remain in step with that time-honored position.

IV. Consultation with the Executive Director of the CRCNA

In February and September 2009, council representatives from the two churches met with Rev. Gerard Dykstra, the Executive Director of the CRCNA, to explain their findings to date and to ask for his advice and counsel regarding which direction they should consider.

V. Exploratory meetings

In July and again in October 2009, exploratory meetings were held with various churches scattered around Michigan that had been finding themselves increasingly distanced and disenfranchised from their home classes as a result of synod's decisions. At the July meeting, there were eight churches present. In October, eleven churches sent representatives to the meeting. Some of these churches were just starting to encounter the "conflict of conscience" problem at the classical level. But unanimously, all of those present on October 8, 2009, were in favor of the forming of a new classis in Michigan, with the Lord's timing.

VI. Invitation from Classis Minnkota

Simultaneously in the course of summer 2009, on behalf of the interested churches, Second CRC was having some in-depth and supportive conversations with representatives of Classis Minnkota, which is on record as being a classis of like mind. Representatives of Second CRC expressed to them a dual desire of either realigning with an existing classis, or of forming a new classis in Michigan—one that would remain within the Christian Reformed Church, yet be shaped by a confessional Reformed vibrancy and substance along with biblically qualified male officebearers. The representatives of Second CRC explained that they "believed this to be a God-honoring option for those churches who do not wish to violate their conscience when confronted with the ordination of women officers," nor did they wish "to be in the unpleasant position of continually giving protest at such classis meetings." Responding to the communications with them, in their September 17, 2009, meeting, Classis Minnkota upheld the churches seeking a new classis home in prayer and offered the following advice: that we seek a new classis in Michigan within the CRC when the sufficient number of churches are ready for it, and in the meantime join with their classis for mutual support, for encouragement, and for the option of serving the Lord with their classis without the "conflict of conscience" problem.

VII. Overtures to Synod 2010

In the fall of 2009, although some of the conservative congregations in the Michigan area were "not quite ready" for their congregations to make the realignment switch, the two churches of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, and Trinity CRC, Sparta, came to the conviction that it was difficult for their churches to remain in limbo for a substantial length of time. Thus a mutual decision was reached to accept the offer of Classis Minnkota to realign with their classis. It was reasoned that only these two congregations would be inconvenienced by the travel this would require. Classis Minnkota wholeheartedly accepted and

welcomed this proposed affiliation. Consequently, overtures were drafted by the respective congregations, and adopted by both Classes Grand Rapids North and Kalamazoo, and in good faith, dutifully and optimistically sent on to synod. Classis Minnkota also sent two overtures to synod, endorsing and requesting the same (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 657-61; Note: Overture 2 has the incomplete version on pp. 659-60; *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 757-60 has the complete version of Overture 2, precisely as Classis Kalamazoo had passed it; see also *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 885-91).

In June 2010, in their sessions of synod at Trinity Christian College, the delegates serving on the advisory committee were divided into two opinions: a majority and a minority report. The majority report recommended that synod accede to the overtures. The minority report gave the exact opposite recommendation. Synod adopted the minority recommendation, denying the requests for realignment to Classis Minnkota. The grounds listed for this decision included that a classical affiliation was designed to be with “a group of neighboring churches,” and “that synod encourage Second CRC to request a transfer to a classis in its geographical area.” In essence synod was saying that Classis Minnkota was too far away. Synod also instructed the BOT “to request that the executive director of the CRCNA and Dr. Henry De Moor . . . seek ways forward for Trinity CRC of Sparta, Michigan, and Second CRC of Kalamazoo, Michigan” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 889, 891).

VIII. Further research

Following Synod 2010, Second CRC proceeded as synod had instructed and met with Rev. Gerard Dykstra, holding several meetings in his office and in the respective council rooms. During the next nine months in conjunction with Rev. Dykstra’s instructions, they investigated four area classes again. At that time it looked like Classis Zeeland would be a possibility, but their Interim Committee explained that would not work, since they were already seating women delegates at their meetings. In the spring of 2011, with the sudden departure of Rev. Dykstra, Second CRC needed to start over again, and more time was lost. However by this time two more congregations in Michigan were asking if they could join in the search for realignment.

Following Synod 2011, a number of meetings were held with Rev. Joel Boot and Dr. Henry De Moor. Even though Second CRC council had previously dialogued with every classis from Yellowstone to Huron, at their urging Second CRC began again to pick up correspondence with six classes “closer to home,” including Classes Chicago South, Illiana, Grandville, Georgetown, Thornapple Valley, and Grand Rapids South. With each one the question was raised whether they would be receptive to having churches such as Second CRC join their classis. Each classis, except Illiana, declined the request, because “pro women-in-office churches would not be receptive to the idea.” Dutifully, the council of Second CRC documented the process and the dialoguing correspondence.

IX. Revisiting Classis Illiana

Originally the members of Classis Illiana Interim Committee were very receptive and supportive, and the CRC’s Executive Director and Dr. De Moor urged them also to “consider making room for these churches.” But the Classis Illiana Interim Committee was also receiving pressure from churches who

wanted to delegate women to classis. Consequently, they declined to present our request to their classis, saying that it would be a short-lived solution at best. Instead, on January 30, 2012, the Classis Illiana Interim Committee wrote loving letters back to these four churches, stating

In our opinion, the best solution would be for synod to allow a realignment of churches within the classes of western Michigan to allow these churches to form a new classis that would satisfy your needs and desires. It appears that there are other churches within the neighboring classes that have not approved women serving in the office of pastor, elder, or deacon that could make up the new classis.

Their Classical Interim Committee (CIC) also sent a letter to Rev. Boot and Dr. De Moor and to the Board of Trustees expressing their desire on behalf of Second CRC. In the letter, the Classis Illiana CIC requested that

the Board of Trustees assist in a realignment of some of the churches in western Michigan to allow the formation of a classis which would not accept women serving in the offices of the church. It may be that the best resolution would be to allow these four churches to form the beginning of a new classis, and then allow the other churches to affiliate with them if that is their desire. We respect both sides of this issue and think that there should be a clear and sensible way in which these churches can remain faithful and active within the Christian Reformed Church.

This information was presented with documentation to Rev. Boot and Dr. De Moor at a joint meeting with these churches on February 29, 2012. In conversation with them, both admitted that the options are very limited. We could either ask to go back to Classis Minnkota, which synod already said was too far away, or we could ask to start a new classis in the Michigan area.

X. Prior synodical advice

Early in this realignment search, these churches studied the request of southern California churches to Synod 1996 “to approve . . . a new classis for churches that are persuaded that the ordination of women to the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist is contrary to the Scripture and believe in conscience that they should not be part of a classis in which women are ordained to church office” (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 248).

Synod 1996 did not grant that request, stating that churches have the option to transfer to “a classis more congenial to its congregational temperament than the geographical classis is” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 560). Stressing this point, Synod 1996 also adopted:

2. That synod remind the churches that any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity and that synod is at liberty to consider such grounds in its disposition of the request.

Ground: There is ample precedent for such action: *Acts of Synod 1924*, Articles 52 and 57, pages 51-57; *Acts of Synod 1959*, Article 117, page 50; *Acts of Synod 1960*, Article 45, page 17; *Acts of Synod 1976*, Article 29, pages 23-24; *Acts of Synod 1989*, Article 20, pages 438-40; *Acts of Synod 1989*, Article 82, pages 512-13; *Acts of Synod 1993*, Article 27, page 507.

3. That synod place the following in Church Order Supplement, Article 39:

Any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity; synod is at liberty to consider such grounds in its disposition of the request.

Ground: This serves as a permanent reminder of this decision of synod.
(*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561)

However, when synod answered this request of the southern California churches in 1996, it did so aware that those churches had opportunity to transfer to a classis nearer to their home location. Since 2007, this option was no longer open to churches such as these in western Michigan.

XI. An observation

Please understand that these churches, in keeping with their biblical convictions, do not wish to continuously protest or cause discomfort for those who believe differently than they do on these matters. These churches have been blessed by our Lord with healthy church life with men and women using gifts in complementary roles according to Scripture, and with evangelistic growth. They do not wish to get unnecessarily distracted by this issue, but they desire to carry on with the work and mission God has given them to do as Christian Reformed churches in their communities and in God's kingdom. They also do not want to cause unnecessary conflict or disturbance of the peace by transferring to a classis where a whole-hearted welcome would not be granted because of this issue.

After much prayer and collective wisdom from church leaders, including the previous and current executive directors of the denomination, we believe that God is leading to a better option of starting a new classis in Michigan. This new classis will be for churches who have deep convictions about the Bible's qualifications for leadership in the home and in the church, and that wish to keep devoted male and female members, families, and churches from leaving the CRC.

XII. Overture

Classis Kalamazoo overtures Synod 2013 to direct the Board of Trustees to facilitate the establishment of a new classis in Michigan in accordance with Church Order Article 39 and to permit the transfer of Second CRC from Classis Kalamazoo to this new classis.

Grounds:

1. In Second CRC's reading of Holy Scripture, they believe it is imperative that they make this request. Biblical passages foundational to this request include Acts 6:3; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Corinthians 14:33-40; 1 Timothy 2; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-11; and Titus 2:1-8.
2. Out of reverence for Holy Scripture's instructions and injunctions on this matter, Second CRC cannot in good conscience remain in a classis that promotes the ordination of women to the offices of pastor, elder, or deacon.
3. Second CRC wishes to realign with a classis in which they can serve in harmony rather than to serve "in protest." Synod has provided such allowance in Church Order Supplement, Article 39, b.

4. Synod 2007 allows churches to seek out a like-minded classis with which to participate, and has set precedent to do so (Trinity CRC, Mt. Pleasant, Mich., 1997; Pine Creek CRC, Holland, Mich., 1997; South Bend [Ind.] CRC, 1999; First CRC, Prinsburg, Minn., 2007).
5. Synod has declared that churches and delegates to classis should not be forced to participate against their convictions (Church Order Supplement, Art. 3-a, 1, b and c; 3, and 5).
6. Synod has stated unequivocally that both positions on this matter were to be considered equally valid and equally true. In all fairness and as a matter of justice and equality, those churches that favor the time-honored position of men only in church office ought to have a classical affiliation and environment where they are not forced to go against their convictions and their biblical reading of this matter. This will allow them to continue to serve *within* the Christian Reformed Church, and to do so in good conscience.

Classis Kalamazoo

Jacob Weeda, stated clerk

Overture 5: Encourage Members of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation to Meet Separately from the Full Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

Classis Toronto overtures Synod 2013 to encourage and support the members of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation to meet separately from the full Board of Trustees of the CRCNA at a minimum of once per year so that they can explore and discern how to uniquely serve the Canadian CRC churches and the CRCNA and make recommendations to the full BOT and/or to synod concerning ministry in Canada.

Grounds:

1. This is needed to address the rapidly changing Canadian context, which includes, but is not limited to, these unique ministries: ecumenical relations, representation to the government and civil society, aboriginal relationships, youth ministry, societal issues, chaplains, and Quebec.
2. In the Board of Trustees Report in the *Agenda for Synod 2001*, page 35, the following statement is found: "The Canadian membership of the BOT continues to function as the governing board of denominational ministries unique to Canada. Therefore, the Canadian trustees meet separately from the binational board to conduct Canadian business. This arrangement appears to work acceptably, though it is recognized that this arrangement allows for less meeting time than was previously enjoyed by the Canadian Ministries Board. Continued monitoring of this arrangement is necessary to assure adequate attention to specifically Canadian interests."
3. This will aid the entire denomination in understanding the Canadian context.
4. This will address some of the hopes and concerns raised at the Canadian Catalytic Conversation (C3 CRC Canada Forum) of January 11-12,

2013. See Appendix to this overture as well as to Overture 6 for summary statements from the C3 forum.

5. This will meet the charity laws and the spirit of those laws as enforced by the Canada Revenue Agency.

Classis Toronto
John Meiboom, stated clerk

Appendix

Questions of Leadership and Structure

Reflecting on the current denominational structure, specifically the binational nature of our church, our conversation revealed that we need a structure that is more responsive and attuned to local churches and grass-roots ministries in recognition that this is the source of our missional passion. The call to establish regional synods that meet on a regular basis was expressed in our discussions. We heard that the Burlington office leadership of the church in Canada is not called upon, since they are not seen to have the power and authority necessary to make decisions.

Consequently we heard that the Canadian office needs more authority to lead the whole church in Canada, accompanied by a Canada Corporation Board of Trustees that assumes, once again, a robust role in providing governance in Canada, also to respond to growing Canadian legal requirements for direction and control over the programming of donations made in Canada.

How do we serve God in local and contextualized mission? What is the leadership style we need that encourages growth?

We recognized a difference between professional, managerial leadership that directs agencies and institutions and a more empowering, servant leadership that encourages missional growth locally. Looking forward we would like to see more empowering leadership than managerial leadership. We want to see this shift occur both for staff and for board members that represent us at a denominational level and agency level. This will also require more culturally diverse leadership. At a binational level the suggestion was made that the leadership rotate from Canada to the United States on a term basis. Overall we heard that we want leaders in Canada who have more authority to lead all the denominational ministries in Canada.

Regarding denominational resources, we want the Canadian office to be more empowered to lead and to communicate that leadership. Communication is the key to giving local churches access to denominational resources that may already exist. Local champions can then bring the message from the denomination to the local church. Partnership is a key to moving forward.

As Canadians in the Christian Reformed Church, we seek to lift a unified and distinctly Canadian voice in commitment to the transformation of our communities energized and sustained by the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We value and love our unique Canadian context and diligently seek to contribute to the development of structural frameworks that will best support, enhance, and bless ministry in Canada. We stand united in our prayer, "Let your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven."

Note: For the sake of not duplicating documents in the printed Agenda for Synod, please see the Appendix to Overture 6, pp. 409-11, for the Executive Summary and Report of the Canadian Catalytic Conversation (C3) and the Statement of Shared Understanding, also appended to that overture.

Overture 6: Appoint a Task Force to Reflect on the Statements of the Canadian Catalytic Conversation

I. Background

The recent Canadian Catalytic Conversation (C3) held in Richmond Hill, Ontario, in January 2013, produced a statement that in outline form presented several important issues pertinent to the ministries of the CRCs in Canada (see Appendix).

In brief, the participants in the C3 recognized that there are key societal differences between the United States and Canada that must be taken into account in order to make possible more effective, God-glorifying ministries in both nations in which the CRC lives and works. Thus, Canadian ministries must be given the freedom and latitude to continue to develop ministries related to but unique from the efforts of our U.S. sisters and brothers. For example, the respective ecumenical, social justice, diaconal, and aboriginal ministries differ in both nations, and their uniqueness must be structurally recognized and instituted.

This is not an issue that can be dealt with adequately by any classis or committee or task force so soon after the initial meeting that produced the statement.

II. Overture

Classis Niagara overtures Synod 2013 to

A. Appoint a binational task force, made up of members of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and people outside the BOT to reflect on the statements from the C3, to present to Synod 2014 a series of steps to be followed in order to celebrate and recognize the distinctiveness of Canadian and U.S. ministries of the CRCNA.

B. Consider the suggestions made by the task force and implement changes that will allow the churches in the two nations to work effectively in their respective contexts.

C. Ensure that the results of this task force are utilized by the present task forces addressing structure and culture and strategic planning.

Ground: At the present time the unique socioeconomic contexts of both nations are not adequately taken into consideration structurally for the best elements of our respective ministries to flourish.

Classis Niagara
John TeBrake, stated clerk

Appendix

Executive Summary and Report of the Canadian Catalytic Conversation (C3)

I. Executive summary

While affirming faithful support for a binational CRC in North America, Canadians seek to lift up a unified and distinctly Canadian voice committed to the transformation of our communities within Canada.

Canadian churches are responding to large influxes of immigrant groups, different racial reconciliation issues, and new opportunities for ministry, church planting, and growth.

Canada is a bilingual, secular, pluralist multicultural society. Our different political systems and histories at the federal and provincial levels deeply impact ministries in public justice, health, education, and ecumenical relations.

At this opportune time Canadian classes are invited to carefully consider sending an overture to Synod 2013 to strengthen the church's witness in Canada. These are important priorities that were identified at the C3 Forum, among others:

1. A call for establishing regional gatherings that meet on a regular basis.
2. A call for Canada corporation members of the CRC Board of Trustees to be given the resources needed—including a review of agenda priorities—to exercise robust governance for Canadian programs and Canadian donor dollars, also in response to growing Canadian legal requirements.
3. A call to establish organizational structures that offer denominational leaders within Canada the authority and ability to faithfully respond to Canadian realities in all areas of ministry and mission.

II. C3 Forum: Statement of Shared Understanding

A. Introduction

On January 11-12, 2013, one hundred and twenty delegates and participants gathered at the Richmond Hill Community Christian Reformed Church for the Canadian Catalytic Conversation (C3). This conversation emerged as a response to three major opportunities for input: the Structure and Culture Task Force, the Strategic Planning Task Force, and the review of the role of the Director of Canadian Ministries. The intention was to listen and articulate a unified Canadian voice to contribute to these three processes and to resource Canadian classes for the possibility of creating overtures regarding the needs of Christian Reformed ministry in the Canadian context for Synod 2013.

B. Naming our reality

Canadians in the Christian Reformed Church are grateful to participate in expressions of church that are enriched by a central focus on the Scriptures, Reformed theology, and a desire for the transformation of all spheres of God's creation. We are eager to follow God's call to share the good news of reconciliation through Jesus Christ in our rapidly changing society.

The Christian Reformed Church is invited to pursue future ministry in the increasing secularism and pluralism of Canada. It is Canada's great diversity, in particular, that creates both opportunity and challenge. Our intercultural

communities offer a rich tapestry for partnership. Canada's current immigration patterns highlight the call to extend and receive hospitality with those from very different contexts.

There is a cry, especially in a culture fraught with consumerism and individualism, to engage the whole person in the journey of discipleship, emphasizing faith formation in all areas of life. Such discipleship equips us to fully engage the good news of the gospel in all spheres of life and with all people we encounter. In the face of the restlessness of the next generation, we see an urgent need to connect with our youth to allow them to experience an interesting and attractive role for themselves in the realm of God.

The Christian Reformed Church in its Canadian expression has and will continue to build ecumenical relationships and to engage with other faiths in a posture of learning and bridge building. We recognize the call to remain flexible, ready, and available to the movement and call of God's Spirit, preserving reforming distinctives while welcoming a more open atmosphere in our congregations.

As Canadians, we are aware of, and at times are hindered by, lingering perceptions of the CRC being a Dutch enclave. Our regional diversity and geographical distance from one another can make commitment to ministries of mercy and proclamation difficult. Yet our diaconal and mission work nationally and internationally unifies us and is one distinct part of our identity and reputation. Engagement with First Nations people continues to teach us what it means to be peacemakers and to work toward justice. Christian education, a historical strength, is faced with new questions and juxtaposed with incarnational commitment to our public systems. Our families and churches have suffered painful divisions, and we long to experience reconciliation and to build unity in our diversity.

C. Vision for a preferred future

Our vision for a preferred future is a vibrant church in which all have access to the mentoring and resources they need to be fully engaged participants in the mission of God. Those who gather in community come from every walk of life, committed to build relationship with God and each other, postured to listen and serve in a spirit of mutuality, humility, and receptivity. We see a church in active dialogue with influencers in the pursuit of justice. We see a church in relationship with those on the margins, willing to learn and experience God at work in unexpected places. Canadians in the Christian Reformed Church will be committed to connect with and demonstrate love for one another in our unique contexts in the community of God.

D. Confession

But we acknowledge that the church we love is broken. We confess that control, pride, and fear have hindered our efforts. We choose to humble ourselves and declare that unless God reveals the way forward, we cannot attain the vision, hopes, and dreams we have for the church.

E. Questions of leadership and structure

Reflecting on the current denominational structure, specifically the binational nature of our church, our conversation revealed that we need a structure that is more responsive and attuned to local churches and grassroots ministries in recognition that this is the source of our missional passion. The

call to establish regional synods that meet on a regular basis was expressed in our discussions. We heard that the Burlington office leadership of the church in Canada is not called upon, since they are not seen to have the power and authority necessary to make decisions.

Consequently we heard that the Canadian office needs more authority to lead the whole church in Canada, accompanied by a Canada Corp Board of Trustees that assumes, once again, a robust role in providing governance in Canada, also to respond to growing Canadian legal requirements for direction and control over the programming of donations made in Canada.

How do we serve God in local and contextualized mission? What is the leadership style we need that encourages growth?

We recognized a difference between professional, managerial leadership that directs agencies and institutions and a more empowering, servant leadership that encourages missional growth locally. Looking forward, we would like to see more empowering leadership than managerial leadership. We want to see this shift occur both for staff and for board members that represent us at a denominational level and agency level. This will also require more culturally diverse leadership. At a binational level the suggestion was made that the leadership rotate from Canada to the United States on a term basis. Overall we heard that we want leaders in Canada who have more authority to lead all the denominational ministries in Canada.

Regarding denominational resources, we want the Canadian office to be more empowered to lead and to communicate that leadership. Communication is the key to giving local churches access to denominational resources that may already exist. Local champions can then bring the message from the denomination to the local church. Partnership is a key to moving forward.

As Canadians in the Christian Reformed Church, we seek to lift a unified and distinctly Canadian voice in commitment to the transformation of our communities energized and sustained by the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We value and love our unique Canadian context and diligently seek to contribute to the development of structural frameworks that will best support, enhance, and bless ministry in Canada. We stand united in our prayer, "Let your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven."

Note: The above executive summary and C3 Statement of Shared Understanding was prepared by a Classis Toronto-appointed C3 communications team made up of Jim Dekker (Classis Niagara), Michelle Gritter (Classis Alberta South), Wendy Gritter (Classis Toronto), and Peter Noteboom (Classis Toronto).

Overture 7: Do Not Accede to Recommendations F, H, and I of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II Report

I. Background

The church of Jesus Christ spans all peoples and nations and tongues. It is beautifully and perfectly diverse by God's eternal providence. This catholic church is the culmination to which we are all headed. But we live in a world where geography, language, and culture still have a significant impact upon the gathering of the church. For reasons of birth, economics, politics,

opportunity, and preference—national and regional distributions of peoples still contain substantial variations. Though the biblical drama concludes with perfect diversity, it does not follow that every institution and denomination and congregation must already perfectly display that future reality. Though the desire for our church to increasingly look like that perfectly diverse body is good, we must remember that it is the Lord who builds his church by the work and power of his Holy Spirit. The church belongs to him, and his requirements are sufficient for his purposes.

Though the intentions of the Diversity in Planning Leadership Group II seem noble, we believe some of its recommendations exceed biblical warrant and place arbitrary and legalistic goals upon the denomination at every level of leadership. Classis Zeeland has previously expressed its “concern regarding the hiring, recruitment, and committee appointment policies recommended in the BOT Report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group. We would ask that synod carefully consider the scriptural foundation and theological justification, wisdom, feasibility, and long-term effectiveness of such a policy for denominational leadership. Our classis has particular concern regarding the biblical adequacy of, and bureaucratic control entailed by, the racial quotas advocated in the report and its recommendations” (*Communication 9, Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 750). Synod has not done so and has provided no scriptural justification for these specific policies.

II. Overture

Classis Zeeland therefore overtures Synod 2013, regarding the report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II,

A. Not to accede to Recommendation F.

Grounds:

1. The Scriptures already contain clear requirements for leadership in the church, based upon character (e.g., 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1), giftedness (e.g., 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4; Rom. 12), and calling (e.g., Eph. 2:10; John 20:21). These scriptural mandates are perfectly sufficient and should be the only ground for all appointments.
2. There are no scriptural grounds for any specific division of racial diversity.
3. Such mandatory goals often become a form of legalism.
4. Such mandatory goals often do not allow room for the Spirit’s gifting and calling.

B. Not to accede to Recommendations H and I.

Grounds:

1. The CRCNA already has an office committed to this cause, with its own budget and staff. This is properly the work of the Office of Race Relations and should be subsumed under the current structure and budget.
2. In a time of austerity, in which congregations are struggling and agencies across the board are having their budgets cut back, it is unwise to begin costly new endeavors without biblical command and urgent need.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 8: Appoint a Study Committee to Formulate a CRC Position on Capital Punishment

I. Background

A. *Current denominational position on capital punishment*

The CRC has declared that modern states are not obligated by Scripture, creed, or principle to institute and practice capital punishment. It does, however, recognize that Scripture acknowledges the right of modern states to institute and practice capital punishment if it is exercised with utmost restraint.

A study report adopted by Synod 1981 states that “capital punishment should . . . pertain . . . only to those exceptional instances . . . as are called forth by a substantial threat to the foundation and structure of a free and responsible democratic society, and thus to the safety and welfare of the people” and that the administration of justice should be surrounded “with such safeguards as will tend maximally to preserve and enhance life.” The report concluded, “Given that human life is sacred, that the magistrate is fallible, that time for repentance is desirable, and that imprisonment will normally satisfy the demand for justice . . . it is not desirable that capital punishment be routinely inflicted upon persons convicted of murder in the first degree. Only under exceptional circumstances should the state resort to capital punishment” (*Acts of Synod 1981*, pp. 489-91; see pp. 72-73).

B. *Current position based on synodical decision made in 1981*

The report of the committee reveals a careful study of both Old and New Testament texts.

The primary text of the Old Testament considered by the committee was Genesis 9:6a, which states, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.” The committee concluded that this passage does not require the state to practice capital punishment.

The primary passage of the New Testament was Romans 13:1-4, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

The committee also concluded there is nothing in this passage that requires the state to practice capital punishment, but that capital punishment is permissible and that the state would be remiss in its duty if it did not carry out this responsibility when absolutely necessary.

The members of the 1981 study report were Henry Stob, Clarence Vos, Hessel Bouma III, Stephen Monsma, and Louis Vos.

II. Changes calling for a new study

While the 1981 report was well received when it was presented, that was more than thirty years ago. Since 1981 many things have taken place that indicate the need for doing a new study on this critical matter. The following are a number of things that underlie the urgency of this overture:

A. In 1984, only three years after the 1981 report was presented to synod, a major shift in the judicial system in the United States got under way when the U.S. Congress adopted the Comprehensive Crime Control Act. This decision moved the United States to “get tough on crime,” a movement based on the concept of retributive justice. A new study on the exercise of capital punishment must take this shift into account when it studies this matter.

B. Another change took place in the criminal justice system when it was discovered that DNA would not only assist in determining whether an individual was guilty of a specific crime, but would also provide evidence that would lead to the exoneration of many who had been found guilty of first degree murder and been assigned to death row to await execution. There is now considerable evidence based at least in part on the results of DNA that civil magistrates and juries make far too many mistakes to allow us to be supportive of capital punishment even when it is exercised with “utmost restraint” as was stipulated in the 1981 synodical decision.

C. Synod 2005 adopted a study report on restorative justice. While this report also dealt with retributive justice, a new study on capital punishment requires the CRC to deal with the biblical matter of restorative justice when it considers the stand the CRC should take on capital punishment.

D. A growing number of states in the United States have decided either to declare that capital punishment is illegal in their state or to place a moratorium on its exercise even though the state may legally allow it. These states have moved in this direction in part because they have become more aware of the potential problems related to the judicial system (e.g., see section II, B above) regarding capital punishment. This significant shift must be taken into account when a new study committee considers this issue.

E. While the members of the 1981 synodical study report were respected biblical and civil servants, no member of the committee was intimately involved with the prison system in the United States. Many qualified individuals are available today to form a new committee. We recommend including those who have the expertise, such as attorneys, criminal justice professors, theologians, and prison chaplains. Persons who have such knowledge and experience could provide invaluable insight, should they be utilized in a new study report.

F. A new study committee must also take into account that the United States is the only nation in the developed world that allows capital punishment. Given that other nations have outlawed capital punishment, perhaps a new study committee should consider whether capital punishment of prisoners is supported by Scripture under any circumstance, given the evidence that we are prone to error on such an irreversible act as capital punishment.

G. A new study must look into the position taken by our sister denomination, the Reformed Church in America (RCA), regarding capital punishment. In the year 2000, the RCA gave seven reasons to explain the church's opposition to capital punishment. Those reasons should be taken into consideration (see <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=496>).

III. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures Synod 2013 to form a study committee to formulate a denominational position on capital punishment.

Grounds:

1. The current position of the CRC on capital punishment was formulated more than thirty years ago.
2. In the past thirty years numerous things have taken place that must be taken into account in the formation of a new CRC position on capital punishment.
3. The members of the CRC should know the denominational position re capital punishment.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

Overture 9: Appoint a Study Committee to Equip Our Church in Regard to the Related Issues of Religious Persecution and Religious Liberty

Classis Toronto overtures Synod 2013 to appoint a study committee to equip our church in regard to the related issues of religious persecution and religious liberty.

Grounds:

1. The cause of Christians suffering persecution calls urgently for response. According to the website of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, while people from many different backgrounds and religious traditions suffer persecution, "in today's world the largest group of people being persecuted for their faith are Christians. More than 200 million people in over 60 nations are being denied their basic human rights because of their Christian faith." These statistics point to a dire situation that could grow even worse. International movements such as the "Arab Spring" and globalization, while a mixture of good and bad, are also volatile and could develop in harmful directions. The Christian Reformed Church can provide witness and advocacy in a way that serves both our fellow Christians and our neighbors of any or no faith.
2. Study regarding religious persecution calls us also to study religious liberty so that we can send a coherent message to all people. In both Canada and the United States, issues of religious liberty have entered a critical stage with respect to legislative and judicial judgments. Our societies, including Christians in our societies, have not achieved coherence regarding true pluralism and the rightful place of people of faith in public discourse. The result is that matters of faith readily

become privatized. According to the website of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, “Canadians have a national desire to be tolerant and not impose religious beliefs or practices on those who don’t share their faith. However, this sensitivity is in danger of becoming an intolerance of faith in public life.” Similar observations apply to the United States. Christians in North America do not speak to our neighbors as those who have figured it all out but as pilgrims seeking a just society for all.

3. Classis Toronto recognizes that study committees cost money, which raises questions of stewardship. We believe that the related issues of religious persecution and religious liberty are urgent, complex, and comprehensive enough to merit the church’s attention in the form of a study committee (e.g., the very term *religion* includes theological and ideological presuppositions that a study committee can analyze adroitly from a biblical and Reformed perspective). The results of a study committee will provide common ground for congregational leaders and for agencies such as the Social Justice and Hunger Action ministry and the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee to use in their call to educate and empower the church. Studying religious persecution and liberty offers the kind of public witness to which we are called in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* and the Belhar Confession. Such a study also fits trends in denominational thinking regarding social concerns such as we have seen in study reports dealing with creation stewardship, war and peace, restorative justice, and Christian education. Applying biblical and Reformed thinking to issues of religious liberty is a way for us to carry out our mission of being “sent with the gospel of the kingdom” (*Contemporary Testimony*, para. 41).
4. Responding to the persecution of our fellow Christians is a way for us to obey Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 25 about “the least of these his brothers and sisters.”

Classis Toronto
John Meiboom, stated clerk

Overture 10: Plan an Official Anniversary Acknowledgment or Celebration in Honor of the 450th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism

Classis Toronto overtures Synod 2013 to plan an official anniversary acknowledgment or celebration in honor of the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism this year.

Grounds:

1. There presently is no plan to do this at the synod or by Calvin Theological Seminary.
2. The Heidelberg Catechism has been a definitive part of our Christian identity throughout our years as a denomination (e.g., the answer on “comfort”).

Classis Toronto
John Meiboom, stated clerk

Overture 11: Appoint a Task Force to Study Eastern Mystical Practices and Their Spiritual Impact on the Church

I. Background

Eastern mystical practices have their roots in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The practices of these religions include, but are not limited to, martial arts (karate, judo, tai chi), yoga, and meditation. When practiced as part of an Eastern religion, these things carry spiritual significance.

At the heart of this issue is whether or not Christians may participate in Eastern mystical practices apart from the spiritual roots of these things. Can these practices be redeemed and used by Christians to the glory of God? Can, for example, a martial arts pose that was originally intended to pay homage to a god now be used for physical and mental health without drawing on its spiritual meaning?

Within the Christian Reformed denomination, some churches are using practices like karate as a way to connect with their community. Several people have become members of Providence CRC since attending karate classes (see "Creating Community with Karate," *The Banner*, July 8, 2011). Madison Avenue CRC, Paterson, New Jersey, uses karate to connect with people in the community, many of them kids from single-parent and grandparent homes (see "Karate for Kids in New Jersey," *The Banner*, May 24, 2012). The Lutheran Community Church, a church plant in Alberta, used karate to develop relationships with their neighbors in their new community (see "The Church Has Left the Building," *The Banner*, Jan. 18, 2011).

Outside of the CRC there are organizations that put a Christian perspective on some of these practices. Karate for Christ uses karate to lead people to Christ (www.karateforchrist.com). There are various Christian yoga organizations, such as Holy Yoga (www.hollyyoga.net) and Outstretched (www.christianyoga.us) that seek to deepen people's relationship with Christ.

On the other hand, there are Christians who are concerned about the spiritual impact of these practices on Christians and the church. Within the Christian Reformed Church there are ministry leaders with a heightened sensitivity to discerning the spiritual world who believe that the practice of such things is a foothold for the devil's activity and could lead Christians astray. For example, Dr. Al Vander Griend, CRC pastor and former denominational leader with extensive knowledge and experience about prayer, has expressed concerns about the spiritual impact of these practices within our denomination. At Calvin College Dr. Nancy Van Noord, Kinesiology professor, has requested a review of these practices in the curriculum and on campus. Rev. Paul Vander Klay of Living Stones CRC in Sacramento, California, has blogged about Christians and the practice of yoga at www.paulvanderklay.wordpress.com.

Outside of our denomination well-known Christian leaders have also expressed their concerns about some of these practices. Just to name a couple, Mark Driscoll has written about it on his blog (<http://pastormark.tv/2011/11/02/christian-yoga-its-a-stretch>), and John McArthur debated Doug Paggitt on this topic on CNN (<http://youtu.be/FiY6OpLG9VQ>).

There is a growing amount of literature from various theological perspectives. In all of this, there is the matter of carefully discerning God's truth.

Such study needs to be done in a biblical manner taking into account our Reformed world-and-life view. Within the CRC there is currently a desire to understand the issue from a biblical and Reformed perspective.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids South overtures Synod 2013 to appoint a study committee to evaluate Eastern mystical practices and their spiritual impact on the church.

Grounds:

1. There are Christians both in support of and opposed to some or all Eastern mystical practices due to their personal understanding of the impact on a Christian's spirituality.
2. Eastern mystical practices are prevalent both in our society and within our Christian Reformed churches. We must seek truth about their spiritual impact on the church and congregants.
3. Although the Christian Reformed Church has over thirty position statements on a variety of contemporary topics, it has not studied Eastern mystical practices.
4. The variety of Eastern mystical practices is wide and complex. A study committee of wise, discerning theologians, ministry leaders, and practitioners will serve the church and her people well.

Classis Grand Rapids South
Kenneth E. Van Wyk, stated clerk

Overture 12: Appoint a Study Committee to Expand on the 1973 Report and Conclusions on Homosexuality

I. Background

Synod 1973 adopted Report 42 by the Committee to Study Homosexuality. The 1973 report shows solid biblical exegesis and considerations on both the moral and pastoral levels, and ever since has been the standard CRC understanding of what the Bible says on this subject. Synod 2002 recommended the report "Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members" (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 313-51; *Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 483-84), which expands on the 1973 report by offering helpful insights on how to come alongside those with same-sex attraction. Synod has consistently reaffirmed the 1973 report in its decisions from 1981, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2004,¹ and most recently in 2011, rejecting an overture to restudy homosexuality because "the 1973 report thoroughly studied the issue from a biblical and theological perspective, and the 2002 report addressed the pastoral issues well. These reports are still relevant today" (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 828).

In affirming the 1973 and 2002 reports, new circumstances have arisen that bring practical and ethical difficulties for ministers, members, and congregations who wish to abide by those reports. The Christian Reformed

¹ Cf. *Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 66; *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 522, 524; *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 572-73; *Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 622-63; *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 710; *Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 630-32.

Church has many congregations where same-sex marriage is recognized by law. Since 2002, Canada, Iowa, New York, and Washington, D.C., among others, have begun to recognize same-sex marriages. In addition, polls and elections are beginning to show that public opinion is shifting on homosexuality so that the biblical view articulated in the 1973 report is increasingly in the minority.²

Due to these new circumstances, the church is presented with many questions about how to apply the biblical stance on homosexuality, such as the following: How shall ministers respond to same-sex couples who request a marriage ceremony? How shall churches respond to couples who request use of church buildings or grounds to hold a same-sex marriage ceremony? If a congregation or minister were to be sued for discrimination, what would be the Christian response? Are Christians duty-bound to oppose the legality of same-sex marriage or civil unions in civil society? Under what circumstances shall Christians communicate the biblical view to the greater society, and in a way that displays the love of Christ? Are Christians called to oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage? Does a Christian attending a same-sex marriage ceremony of a friend or relative indicate moral assent to same-sex marriage? Are Christian parents duty-bound to refrain from participation in a child's same-sex ceremony? Would a Christian compromise biblical truth by standing up as a witness to a same-sex ceremony?

II. Overture

We ask that Synod 2013 appoint a study committee to take the 1973 report and its conclusions on homosexuality (*Acts of Synod 1973*, Report 42, pp. 609-33) and expand on them in order to give guidance and clarification on how members, clergy, and churches can apply this biblical standpoint in light of the legality of same-sex marriage in certain jurisdictions, as well as how to communicate this biblical position in a loving way within a North American culture where the biblical view is increasingly in the minority. Synod has consistently reaffirmed the biblical analysis from 1973. We do not wish to challenge or replace the 1973 report in any way, but ask for guidance on how to apply the report's conclusions in these new situations.

² Ontario was the first North American state/province to recognize same-sex marriage on June 10, 2003, followed by British Columbia on July 8, 2003. In 2004 same-sex marriage became legal in Quebec, Massachusetts, Yukon Terr., Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and Labrador. Canada passed the Civil Marriage Act on July 20, 2005, making same-sex marriage legal throughout the nation. Same-sex marriage became legal in Connecticut (2008); Iowa (2009); Vermont (2009); New Hampshire and Washington, D.C. (2010); and New York (2011). On Nov. 6, 2012, same-sex marriage was approved by voters in Maine, Maryland, and Washington, while Minnesota became the first state where voters rejected a ban on same-sex marriage. In addition, opinion polls conducted by Gallup have shown an increase in the percentage of Americans who believe same-sex marriage should be legal, from 27 percent in 1996 to a majority in 2011 ("For First Time, Majority of Americans Favor Legal Gay Marriage" by Frank Newport, May 20, 2011; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/147662/First-Time-Majority-Americans-Favor-Legal-Gay-Marriage.aspx>). In May 2012, Gallup found that 54 percent of adults consider same-sex relations to be "morally acceptable," up from 38 percent in 2002 ("U.S. Acceptance of Gay/Lesbian Relations Is the New Normal" by Lydia Saad, May 14, 2012; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/154634/Acceptance-Gay-Lesbian-Relations-New-Normal.aspx>).

Grounds:

1. The 1973 report on homosexuality shows sound biblical exegesis and considerations on both the moral and pastoral levels.
2. The 2002 report on Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members expanded on the 1973 report with respect to coming alongside homosexual members within CRC congregations.
3. The 1973 report has been reaffirmed by many synods.
4. New social and political circumstances have arisen since 1973 and 2002 that raise a wide variety of questions and difficulties about how to apply the conclusions of these existing reports.
5. Insights and advice from experts in the fields of theology and ethics would be helpful to churches, ministers, and members as they make decisions on how to respond to these new circumstances.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 13: Provide Pastoral Advice on the Issue of Gay Marriage

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod 2013 to provide pastoral advice on the issue of gay marriage.

Grounds:

1. As state after state legalizes gay marriage and the U.S. Supreme Court considers it on a national level, this will be an issue with which all of our churches will have to struggle.
2. Previous reports from synodical study committees, while excellent in their biblical focus and pastoral advice, do not directly address the issue of the legalization of gay marriage and how churches should respond.
3. As gay marriage becomes more common, there will be legal issues that may affect churches that refuse to marry gay couples.

Classis Pacific Northwest

Matthew J. Borst, stated clerk

Overture 14: Modify the Two-Year EPMC Program for Ordained Pastors Who Have Already Served in Parish Ministry

I. Background

The CRCNA has for many years successfully used Church Order Articles 6 and 8 to ensure adequate training and attention so that pastors ordained in the CRCNA share the ethos and the CRCNA's commitment to being a Reformed and confessional denomination. In recent years, synod has recognized that some adjustments are necessary due to changing ecclesiastical landscapes, educational methods, and diversification. The change to allow RCA pastors an easier route into CRCNA ministry, the changes in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC), commissioned

pastor roles, and clearer guidelines on how church articles are to be used have all resulted from this evolution.

As part of this evolution, we believe the synod should carefully consider the process that is being employed as it relates to ministers that are already ordained in other denominations. We believe the CRCNA's commitment to applying the gospel to all of life, its network of Christian schools, and its ongoing efforts to grow in a changing cultural landscape are attractive to those outside the CRCNA. If experienced pastors from other denominations share these commitments and desire to serve, there should be a set of requirements that fits their individual life situation. We do not propose that this should be a path that compromises our core beliefs or is easier, but rather that this path should take into account the education, background, and the denomination of the pastor desiring to become a part of the CRCNA.

The current path of entering the CRCNA for most pastors from other denominations involves being called by a church that has a demonstrated need (Article 8), proceeding through the EPMC on-campus program or a 24-month distance program. We believe that the Article 6 process, with the on-campus or 24-month requirement is effective for pastors pursuing ordination for the first time or for those who have been ordained for less than five years. For those who have been ordained more than five years, we believe the EPMC process can be modified in a way to make it more effective, challenging, and beneficial to pastors and the denomination.

II. Overture

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to modify the two-year process now required for those entering the EPMC program through Calvin Theological Seminary to one year for pastors who have received a theological education equivalent to that of Calvin Theological Seminary, who have served at least five years in ordained ministry in their denomination, and who have received an endorsement from both classis and the Candidacy Committee.

The modified one-year EPMC program for these pastors would take into consideration their ability and gift for preaching, their knowledge and understanding of redemptive history, their knowledge and appreciation for the history of the CRCNA, and their knowledge and commitment to the creeds and confessions of the CRCNA.

Ground: The current two-year EPMC program presently requires ordained pastors from other denominations to take courses that previously were part of their theological education. A modified one-year EPMC program for these ordained pastors would consist of classes and coursework that reflect the needs, skills, and background of the specific pastor. The requirements of a modified one-year process should be specific to the needs of the particular pastor and should be approved by both the classis and the Candidacy Committee.

We believe that these steps are reasonable, helpful, and will serve the church well.

Classis of the Heartland
Robert D. Drenten, stated clerk

Overture 15: Mandate Denominational Agencies and the Board of Trustees to Develop Concrete Strategies to Carry Out the Great Commission

Classis Northern Illinois overtures Synod 2013 to mandate all denominational agencies and the Board of Trustees to focus and prioritize their energies to develop concrete strategies to effectively carry out the central task of the church (the Great Commission, Matt. 28:16-20) and to report back to synod annually about strategies and results.

Grounds:

1. The Great Commission is the indispensable mission of the church. If the church is not effectively bringing nonbelievers to saving faith in Jesus and training members to become disciples and disciplers, then we are missing our calling, no matter how many other important things we are addressing.
2. Though our ministries, congregations, and members have a heart for reaching the lost, we must confess our faithfulness has been ineffective. A new resolve is needed. In his "State of the Church" address at Synod 2012, executive director Joel Boot noted, "the condition of the church is critical, the ground is shaking beneath our feet" (things are changing), "but not in the right direction; the condition is critical; they are either the beginning of the worst of times or the beginning of the best of times." Along with citing many changes in the CRC during the past two years, Rev. Boot also presented the following data on the membership within the CRC, based on CRC *Yearbook* statistics:

Year	Membership
2008	268,000
2009	264,000
2010	262,000
2011	255,000
2012	251,000

These numbers underscore and emphasize the fact that the CRCNA is in a state of continuing decline.

An article in *The Banner* (Apr. 2012, pp. 22-23), summarizing Rev. Moses Chung, director of Christian Reformed Home Missions, observes "that a sizeable portion of CRC congregations and their leaders feel deep anxiety and confusion about the future and are wondering how they will be able to survive in this new time of challenges and change. Many churches, Chung says, have an aging membership. Meanwhile young people and young families are leaving or not joining. Sometimes this has resulted in congregations closing their doors." Chung added, "It is sobering to think of what is happening to churches in North America. . . . We no longer have as much of a voice or impact on society at large."

3. This mandate is consistent with the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church that states in Part VIII under its objectives: "Engage in global mission: Recognizing that God rules over all, CRC ministries will proclaim redemption, forgiveness, and new life in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

4. Our denomination is focusing on social and environmental issues that create tensions, diffuse our energies, and result in more members leaving the CRC, while ignoring our ineffectiveness with carrying out the fundamental task to which Jesus called us.

In his July 25, 2012, summary of Synod 2012 report to the churches of the CRCNA, executive director Joel Boot observed, “The delegates worked diligently to address significant matters before the assembly brought by the various standing committees. . . .” Of the nineteen significant matters brought to the floor of synod, none of them related to, or focused on, the most important significant matter that the church is commanded to by Christ in his Great Commission.

Classis Northern Illinois
Gerald W. Frens, stated clerk

Overture 16: Adjust the Pension System to Distribute Benefits Fairly to Clergy Couples Sharing a Single Pastoral Position

I. Background

For the purposes of this overture, a clergy couple is a married couple in which both husband and wife are ordained as ministers of the Word or as commissioned pastors. There are at least four such couples sharing a single position within the denomination. More are likely—for example, the candidates approved by Synod 2012 alone included three married couples.

The current ministers’ pension system has no way of dealing with part-time employees. To be eligible for the denominational pension, one must work a minimum of 20 hours per week, and then that person is eligible to be included in the regular pension plan for full-time employees. The employee then, for the sake of the pension system, is considered a full-time employee and charged the regular pension rate.

Currently there are two options for clergy couples sharing a single position: (1) place the pension in the name of either the husband or wife and then structure the position such that this person works a minimum of 20 hours/week; or (2) request separate pensions for both husband and wife, in which case the local church would be charged for two separate pensions.

The pension system changed in the summer of 2011. Assuming that the clergy couple does not have two separate pensions, the pension will be in either the husband’s or wife’s name. Upon retirement, under the new system, the clergy couple has a choice to make. If they choose the “single life with five years certain” form, which is the normal benefit form, the pension will be paid at a higher rate, but only to the person named on that pension form. If, after five years of retirement, that person dies, there is no pension payment made to the remaining husband or wife, despite the fact that the husband or wife put in half the work in accruing the pension. If the clergy couple desires to ensure that survivor benefits are paid in the event that the person named on the form dies first, they must choose the surviving spouse option at an overall 10 percent reduced benefit. Under this option, the survivor benefit would be only 66.7 percent of the initial benefit. There are other similar options designed to provide survivor benefits, but all at an initial

reduced benefit. Thus the current system essentially guarantees that clergy couples will need to select an option with a significantly reduced payout in order to ensure that the work that each one of them contributed to their years of service is acknowledged.

Possible alternatives exist (see section III, Possible alternatives).

When these concerns were expressed by a clergy couple directly to the denominational board of pension trustees, the board discussed the matter and felt the plan was not administratively able to handle part-time participation and benefit distribution, so making a change in plan participation would be significant and not prudent at this time.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures Synod 2013 to instruct the CRCNA Pension Board to adjust the current denominational pension system to provide a fair distribution of benefits to clergy couples sharing a single pastoral position within the denomination.

Grounds:

1. In a clergy couple situation in which the husband and wife share a single position, the pension benefit for the surviving spouse should not be different depending on who died first and whose name was on the benefit form. If both husband and wife are contributing half to the number of years served, both husband and wife should be treated equally upon their retirement.
2. In a clergy couple situation in which the husband and wife share a single position, the clergy couple should not be forced to select a lower monthly benefit in order to ensure both husband and wife will receive the financial peace of mind provided by the denominational pension.
3. The current system does not provide disability or surviving spouse benefits if the unnamed husband or wife becomes disabled or dies before retirement, despite that person's contributing half of the time to the years of service accrued; but long-term disability and survivor benefits should allow both to be covered equally.
4. Synod has expressed a desire that the denominational pension plans provide equitable retirement benefits for all CRCNA clergy (Memorandum to Active Participants of the Ministers' Pension Plans, The Pension Trustees, February 25, 2011).
5. It seems likely that there will be more and more clergy couples in the future. It is even likely that some clergy couples may move back and forth from sharing a single position and each working independently, especially depending on changing life and family circumstances. The current system has no good way to handle this.

III. Possible alternatives

One possible solution might be that the benefit payout for the years of service in which a position is shared by husband and wife may be given half in the husband's name and half in the wife's. In this case, the couple might choose if they want the benefit for each to be the default "single life with five years certain" option or the "surviving spouse" option. Each part of the payout would be treated accordingly. In this case, regardless of which spouse

died first or which option was chosen, the other would still receive a benefit that reflects that person's years of service within the denomination. A better solution to the disability and survivor coverage concern would still need to be found.

Another possible solution would be simply to give both spouses credit for half a year of service for each year that they shared a position and the church they served paid into the system. This would seemingly accomplish the same ends as the above and furthermore provide a means for determining disability or surviving spouse benefits that would be more equitable in the event that either husband or wife died or became disabled before retirement. With this approach, in the event that they later held separate positions that both contributed to the pension system, these separate years of service could easily be attributed to each person's separate pension record.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

Overture 17: Revisit Funding Formula for the CRCNA Ministers' Pension Program

I. Background

The Pensions and Insurance report within the *Agenda for Synod 2012* describes the current ministers' pension plan as follows:

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in the plan. The current amount of the assessment for 2012 is \$42.96 per member in Canada and \$37.20 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$9,840 and \$7,704, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

(*Agenda for Synod 2012*, pp. 185-86)

II. Overture

Classis B.C. North-West overtures Synod 2013 to revisit its funding formula for the CRCNA ministers' pension program, considering especially the situations of smaller congregations.

Grounds:

1. For one church in our classis (which has 40 members), the \$9,840 assessment constitutes about 9 percent of their annual budget, excluding ministry shares. Larger churches with 240 members and one minister pay the same amount, resulting in a much smaller percentage of their annual budget.
2. For smaller churches in our classis, this high percentage/rate pension assessment could directly affect their ability to support CRCNA ministries, invest in modifications to improve building accessibility, or attend conferences and training programs.

Classis B.C. North-West
Andy de Ruyter, stated clerk

Overture 18: Recognize the Witness of “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” in the Covenant for Officebearers

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod 2013 to recognize the witness of “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” in the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2012 made the following two decisions:
 3. That synod authorize a formal category called “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” (EFD).
 - a. This category identifies declarations and statements of faith that speak to global realities and uniquely enable the CRCNA to formally state its commitment to and live out key biblical principles.
 - b. Documents in this category, while important and contributing to the CRCNA’s worldwide witness and ministry, are not considered part of the confessional basis of the CRCNA, and, therefore, will not be listed in the Covenant for Officebearers.
 5. That synod adopt the Belhar Confession and its accompanying documents (the Accompanying Letter from the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa and the joint statement of the RCA and CRC) as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration and recommend it to the churches for study and for incorporation of its themes into their discipling and liturgical ministries.

Grounds:

- a. The central themes of unity, justice, and reconciliation in the Belhar Confession reflect biblical teaching and are consistent with the historic Reformed confessions.
- b. The Belhar Confession addresses important issues that are also pertinent to the CRCNA’s own history and context in North America.
- c. The three-year discussion of the Belhar Confession revealed a lack of consensus in support of adopting the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession on par with the historic confessions adopted by the CRCNA.
- d. The three-year discussion of the Belhar Confession revealed substantial support for the Belhar Confession to have an official status.

(Acts of Synod 2012, pp. 766-67)

2. Synod adopted the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church before it had opportunity to consider including “Ecumenical Faith Declarations,” as this category of documents was adopted at the same synod.
3. Synod adopted the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church and commended it to the churches “as a means to encourage ongoing, vital engagement of officebearers with the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions” (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 761). Within the covenant, synod also included the statement “Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context” (pp. 761-62). The category of “Ecumenical Faith

Declarations” should also be part of the “ongoing, vital engagement of officebearers” and “a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.”

4. Synod has recommended “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” for study and the incorporation of its themes into the churches’ discipling and liturgical ministries. While this title of “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” is different from that of “contemporary testimony” found in the affirmation of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, the intent was to affirm the importance of both as expressions of faith for forming and guiding our worship and practice. While we recognize that Ecumenical Faith Declarations are not equivalent to our Three Forms of Unity, for our international and multicultural witness the Belhar Confession was affirmed as significant and important at Synod 2012. As such, the Belhar Confession should be included in the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church as less than our Three Forms of Unity but as important and useful as *Our World Belongs to God*.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Matthew J. Borst, stated clerk

Overture 19: Do Not Adopt Proposed Changes to Church Order Articles 25-c, 34, 40, 45, and 73-77; and Retain the Language of the Current Form for Ordination

I. Background

Classis Hudson is grateful for the work that the Office of Deacon Task Force has put into its report to Synod 2013. We welcome the efforts to raise the standing of deacons in the church community and the challenges to all officebearers to take seriously the responsibility of leading the church in a ministry of mercy. Nonetheless, we are concerned that the proposed changes too hastily dismiss the historic, biblical understanding and practice of the Reformed church with regard to the separate offices of elder and deacon.

II. Overtures

A. We, therefore, overture Synod 2013 to receive the Office of Deacon Task Force report without adopting the proposed changes to Church Order Articles 25-c, 34, 40, 45, and 73-77.

Grounds:

1. Ephesians 4:11-13, which the report cites as its starting point (see pp. 264-65 of the report), describes the mission of the entire people of God, but not the specific work of a diaconal office. Because of its emphasis on this one metaphor, the report is overly dismissive of other New Testament passages (such as Acts 6:1-6; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10), which describe the *office* of deacon as distinct from that of the elders.
2. The report’s description of the church as a servant community, seen especially in the proposed changes to Church Order Articles 73-77, unnecessarily marginalizes the work of evangelism and the church’s

call to “declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

3. The participation of deacons in the broader assemblies is not necessary for their effective service in God’s kingdom and the local church.

B. We further overture Synod 2013 to retain the language of the current Form for Ordination.

Ground: The proposed changes are overly specific, and do not add anything to the mandate of deacons that is not already included in the Form for Ordination. Even the overture which requested the formation of this task force observed that the current wording “is a powerful statement requiring no changes” (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 691).

Classis Hudson

Joel D. Vande Werken, stated clerk

Communication 1: Classis Minnkota

Classis Minnkota communicates to Synod 2013 its endorsement and support of the overtures originating from the councils of Trinity CRC of Sparta, Michigan, and Second CRC of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and approved by Classis Grand Rapids North and Classis Kalamazoo to direct the Board of Trustees (BOT) to facilitate the establishment of a new classis in Michigan in accordance with Church Order Article 39 and to permit the transfer of Trinity CRC (Sparta, Mich.) and Second CRC (Kalamazoo, Mich.) to the new classis.

Grounds:

1. Classis Minnkota has already shown support for these churches in agreeing to receive the transfer of Trinity CRC of Sparta, Michigan, and Second CRC of Kalamazoo, Michigan, upon approval of Synod 2010 and in receiving the transfer of First CRC of Prinsburg, Minnesota, in 2007.
2. In addition to First CRC of Prinsburg, synod has allowed other churches to seek out like-minded classes with which to participate: Trinity CRC, Mount Pleasant, Michigan, 1997; Pine Creek CRC, Holland, Michigan, 1997; South Bend (Ind.) CRC, 1999.
3. Church Order Article 39 allows for the “organizing of a new classis and the redistricting of classes” with the approval of synod. Supplement, Article 39 adds, “Any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographical proximity.”
4. Classis Grand Rapids North and Classis Kalamazoo have passed overtures to synod asking the BOT to help start a new theological classis in Michigan for CRC churches that honor and hold to the position that only qualified males may serve in the offices of minister of the Word, elder, and deacon.
5. Synod 1995 wanted to make room for both interpretations of Scripture on the issue of women in office in our denomination (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 726-32). We believe that Scripture does not teach two valid, yet contradictory positions. However, formation of a theological classis would functionally allow churches within the CRC to hold either position in good conscience.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Hamilton

Classis Hamilton, meeting February 19, 2013, spent significant time discussing the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II report in response to concerns expressed in an overture from one of its member churches. Out of that discussion, which reviewed both the strengths and weaknesses of recommendations of the report, Classis Hamilton passed a motion to communicate to Synod 2013 specifically the following:

That Recommendation H of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II report is an unnecessary and unstewardly use of ministry resources, and Classis Hamilton thus hopes that it is not adopted. The following grounds were given in support of this motion:

Grounds:

1. The CRCNA has already made good progress toward diversity in leadership.
2. Previous synods, the Board of Trustees, and executive staff of the denomination are all on record as being committed to the growing diversity of the CRCNA, both in terms of membership and leadership.
3. One million dollars over two years could be more strategically used for kingdom purposes.

Classis Hamilton

John den Otter, stated clerk

Communication 3: Classis Yellowstone

Classis Yellowstone is pleased with the synodical Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force report because it spells out the importance of the office of deacon and responds to the need to, from time to time, refresh language associated with the office as contained in the Church Order.

However, our classis as a body *does not* stand in favor of this synodical report for the following reasons:

1. Diakonia Remixed tries to level the field of offices so much that it takes away from the unique calling and roles of the offices of elder and deacon.
2. The current structure for the office of deacon as spelled out in the Church Order is adequate since it honors the role of deacon and meets the needs of congregations through their work of service.
3. In our opinion, appointing deacons to the assemblies of the church (classis and synod) as the Diakonia Remixed report suggests does not necessarily aid deacons in their service; in fact we believe it may take away from their work of service in their church and extended community by encumbering them with duties associated with a larger assembly.

Classis Yellowstone thanks synod for hearing our concerns contained in this communication.

Classis Yellowstone

Del VanDenBerg, stated clerk

Communication 4: Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Over the years, various synods of the Christian Reformed Church have debated the role of deacons in the ministry of the church and have questioned whether the structures of the church are adequate to enable a flourishing diaconate. In particular, the question has frequently been raised whether deacons ought to participate in the major assemblies of the church such as synod.

This question was raised most recently by Classis Grandville when they sent an overture to Synod 2010, requesting synod to establish a task force to propose changes to relevant Church Order articles which would allow for an expanded role for deacons and a revitalized, more robust diaconate that is better able to meet the challenges of our hurting world.

Synod 2010 appointed such a task force to make recommendations that would better equip the church to embrace the role of deacon. This task force presents a report to Synod 2013, proposing these additions and expanded roles.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan wishes to express its endorsement of the synodical *Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force* report and its recommendations to Synod 2013 (see pp. 263-98). We believe the task force has done excellent biblical and historical work and that these recommendations will help the church respond to the triune God and grow in being his servant people in the world.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan
Allen Brander, stated clerk

Communication 5: Classis Alberta North

Classis Alberta North issues the following communication to Synod 2013 of the Christian Reformed Church of North America:

Classis Alberta North supports and urges the adoption of the *Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force* report and its recommendations.

Grounds:

1. Leadership in the creeds and confessions includes the ministry of mercy.
2. Parity of the office: the “whole” church needs to be represented at synod, and that cannot happen when one of the major offices is absent.
3. The current cultural and social context of the church requires a re-invigorated diaconate, and this is one step in that direction.
4. The arguments made in the past about deacons at synod are compelling and sufficient.
5. The theological basis for the office of deacon is better anchored in the Ephesians 4:11-13 passage.
6. The churches of our own classis and the communities in which we live have been richly blessed by the development and growth of our diaconal ministries. We believe the implementation of the task force recommendations will enhance the growth of diaconal ministry across all of the communities served by our denomination.

Classis Alberta North
Henk Van Andel, stated clerk

Personal Appeal

1. Mr. J. and Mrs. K. Weber

Appeal of Mr. J. and Mrs. K. Weber from a decision of Classis Pacific Northwest on September 11, 2012.

