



Rev. George Saylor stands in front of the ruins of Connections CRC's ministry center.

London Church's Ministry Center Burns

The ministry center of Connections Christian Reformed Church in London, Ontario, burned down March 27, just a week after finishing touches were put on renovations.

The church, which meets for worship in a local movie theater, renovated a large warehouse into a ministry center with offices, meeting rooms, a kitchen, and other space that could be used to help the church grow, said Rev. George Saylor, pastor of the church.

"We moved in late in January. We had just finished decorating and furnishing the week before," he said.

No one was hurt in the fire, which appears to have been started by a block heater in a vehicle parked near the building.

—Anita Brinkman

GEMS, Cadet Counselors Swap Roles

Counselors for the GEMS (girls' ministry) and Cadets (boys' ministry) swapped roles for an evening at Fruitport (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church.

While the Cadet counselors helped girls build Pinewood Derby cars for the church's annual race, GEMS counselors took the boys to the kitchen, where they earned a baking badge while making cookies and muffins for the whole group.

"The girls learned what boys can do, and the boys learned what the girls can do," said Cadet counselor Dennis Kuiper.



Fruitport GEMS display their cars, made with the assistance of Cadet counselors.

The switch was also a hit with the kids. "I have never built anything, but now I want to do it again," said Carly Sumerix, 11.

From the kitchen, Davis Gilbert, 7, reported, "We made different types of muffins, surprise muffins with jelly and applesauce inside them."

—Amy Rycenga

Board of Trustees to Review Structure

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church decided to assemble a short term taskforce to review the structure and culture of the denomination's ministries and leadership.

The decision comes as a response to a recent organizational assessment done by an outside consultant, and in the wake of the resignations of both the executive director and the director of denominational ministries.

Consultant Peter Meerveld, who wrote the report, found that while there is a strong commitment to the CRC's ministries and a desire for a unified vision, there are fundamental unanswered questions around the authority, relationship, and representation of agencies and ministries within the organization.

"The 'top down' governance of synod and the BOT and the 'bottom up' authority of agencies contribute to unclear roles and responsibilities," Meerveld wrote, noting that the executive director's role as it responds to those challenges is unique.

Meerveld also observed that while the structure and influence of the ministry agency boards provides for greater oversight, those factors contribute to:

- a challenge to the role and authority of administrative leadership

- complex decision making and approval systems that are reducing productivity; and
- tensions among the executive director's advisory team, the agencies and the BOT.

Meerveld said the relationship of the [executive director] with agencies and specialized ministries has been delegated to the director of denominational ministries—contributing to issues with access, conflict management, and communication. That delegation was a result of the 2008 structure change.

The board's review of structure and culture is intended to evaluate possible adjustments to the current structure, not to consider a whole scale remodel of the structure. While one board member asked whether such a review should be mandated and driven by synod, the consensus of the board was that the intent of the taskforce should be "to look at improving what we have," rather than attempting a larger structure review.

The board plans to have the taskforce's membership and mandate defined prior to Synod 2011, which convenes on June 10.

—Gayla R. Postma