

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program Report
Lilly Endowment Inc.
December, 2002 – January, 2004

Christian Reformed Church in North America
“Creating a Culture of Pastoral Excellence”

Project Goals and Analysis

The components of our program under Lilly Endowment Inc.’s grant were designed to both nurture and deepen the knowledge, character, and skills of pastors, and to help them become more organically responsive to their changing environment.

We felt these aims could be achieved on the one hand by articulating and promoting a vision of excellent ministry in the church today, and on the other by programmatic elements that both support and challenge pastors in their ministry.

Our vision (“Marks of Good Ministry”) has six parts:

1. A deep, authentic relationship with God marked by prayer, godliness, and fruits of the Spirit.
2. A strong vision of the mission of the church in which the church exists not merely to sustain itself but to serve the world and minister beyond itself.
3. A thorough grasp of the biblical, pastoral and theological contours of the Christian faith and church, with an ability to communicate these contours in meaningful, relevant, and integrative ways through sound preaching and teaching, and imaginative pastoral leadership.
4. A pastoral identity that includes healthy self understanding, strong relational skills, relationships with significant others that provide mentoring and accountability, and a balanced life with respect to work and non-work.
5. An intelligent appreciation for the congregation as a social system that requires creative and patient leadership in the face of anxieties and conflict.
6. A commitment to lifelong learning, including personal, spiritual, intellectual, and professional growth, and development.

Programmatically, we have worked in five areas:

1. Promotion and teaching of the concept of pastoral excellence.
2. A strengthened mentoring program for pastors.
3. A peer learning program that connects pastors within accountability groups.
4. Regional continuing education opportunities that promote lifelong learning.
5. Dissemination of learning which increases denominational impact.

This vision and program design was in turn based on an analysis of the current state of pastoral ministry which demonstrated, we believe, a need in pastors’ lives for a healthy spiritual life, emotional and pastoral intelligence, an appropriate model of leadership, structures of accountability, mentoring—especially for those in their first five years of ministry, and lifelong learning.

In this first year of program experience we have found that our analysis and vision have resonated well with pastors in the Christian Reformed Church. The challenge to “excellence” has not generated any negative reaction, perhaps because it seems to fit with a perception among pastors that theirs is a high calling, demanding of them their very best in God’s service. In this context, our understanding

of leadership has, we think, been particularly important. It explains that excellent leadership does not mean a pastor drives a congregation by vision and personality along a path that inevitably leads to growth and well-publicized impact. Rather, it is adaptive in nature, demanding a partnership with the congregation and an appreciation for the time and setting of leadership. It demands character, competence, and conviction from the pastor, but it also recognizes that growth, deepened faith, and community impact rest on a confluence of factors that, in God's providence, pastors do not always control.

As we proceed with our grant, there are two concepts that, while implicit in our analysis, we would like to articulate and promote better. This is because our first year of experience underscores their importance for excellence.

The first is "pastoral imagination," the ability of a pastor to see deeply into needs and circumstances in the light of Christian faith, and to articulate fresh and imaginative responses for a congregation to consider. This ability is closely connected to preaching, which is highly valued in our denomination. The second is the distinctiveness of the pastoral vocation, as understood scripturally and theologically. Our implementation team, which meets monthly, spent its first year discussing William Willimon's book, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. This underscored for us how important it is for pastors to be grounded in the nature of their calling—so that they understand their limits and focus their attention on what is of most value to the congregation.

Project Leadership

- Peter Borgdorff is the Executive Director of Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). He bears ultimate responsibility for the project.
- John Bolt is the Chief Financial Officer of the CRCNA. He has general oversight of the financial accounting of the project, although the day to day accounting is handled by the denomination's controller, Chris Cok.
- The Project Director is Michael Bruinooge. He makes program decisions and is responsible for implementation of the project.
- The Project Coordinator is Lis Van Harten. She manages the project on a daily basis, handling record-keeping and most communications.
- The project Implementation Team has seven members and meets monthly:
 - Michael Bruinooge, Director of Ministries Planning, CRCNA
 - Jerry Dykstra, Pastor, Walnut Creek, California
 - Duane Kelderman, Vice President for Administration, Calvin Theological Seminary
 - David Koll, Pastor, Anaheim, California
 - Al Mulder, Director of New Church Development, CRCNA (retired)
 - Kathy Smith, Director of Continuing Education, Calvin Theological Seminary
 - Duane Visser, Director of Pastor-Church Relations, CRCNAThey have an oversight role with regard to the project. They also make decisions regarding proposals under our internal grants program.
- The Advisory Board meets annually. Its first meeting was held in November, 2003. As its name implies, this group gives advice to the implementation team and other leadership concerning the overall direction of the project. Its members have pastoral experience and represent diverse perspectives. They are:
 - George Hunsberger, Director of SPE Project, Western Theological Seminary
 - Moon Bae Kim, Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 - Jake Kuipers, Pastor, Trenton, Ontario
 - Thea Leunk, Pastor, Cincinnati, Ohio
 - Lynn Likkel, Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan

- Tom Niehof, Pastor, Ames, Iowa
- Reggie Smith Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Carlos Tapanes, Pastor, Wyoming, Michigan
- John D. Witvliet, Director, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
- Carl Zylstra, President, Dordt College

Project Activities

Following are the major activities we have undertaken since December, 2002. They are grouped under our five areas of programming:

1. Promotion and Teaching

- January – May, 2003 – Developed logo, brochure, postcards, letterhead and stickers for the project
- March, 2003 – Developed a web site for the project, including separate pages for all components of our project and additional pages for resources, analysis, contacts, and updates
- February and September, 2003 – Wrote to English-speaking pastors and church councils to announce the project
- March and October, 2003 – Translated materials into Spanish and Korean and wrote to Spanish-speaking and Korean-speaking pastors and church councils to announce the project
- May and September, 2003 – Made presentations concerning Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) to classis (regional judicatory) meetings of the CRCNA throughout the U.S. and Canada
- October, 2003 – Mailed notice to pastors concerning an upcoming course at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) on SPE
- 2003 - Designed and placed 10 advertisements concerning the project in CRCNA-related publications
- July, 2003 – January, 2004 – Commissioned eight articles on the pastoral vocation that were published in CRCNA-related publications

2. Mentoring

- Spring, 2003 – Hosted four dinners for senior seminarians of CTS and their spouses to present information about the CRCNA’s mentoring program
- 2003 – Developed a manual for pastor mentors and mentees in their first five years of ministry (manual to be completed in spring of 2004)
- Fall, 2003 - Convened 11 roundtables throughout the U.S. and Canada for mentors and pastors in their first five years of ministry to gain feedback on the mentoring process
- October, 2003 – Convened a conference for “regional pastors”: those who mentor young pastors at the classis level
- October, 2003 – Approved one proposal from Classis Greater Los Angeles to fund (on a matching basis) for three years the appointment of a half time regional pastor (such pastors currently devote volunteer time to the job in addition to pasturing their own congregation)

3. Peer Learning

- May, 2003 – Approved 12 out of 23 proposals to fund one-year peer learning groups among pastors (approved proposals involved 81 pastors and 69 congregations--and came from 7 states and two provinces)
- May, 2003 – With permission of LEI, reallocated SPE funds to devote more to peer learning
- November, 2003 – Approved 13 out of 16 proposals (approved proposals involved 99 additional pastors and 92 congregations--and came from 13 states and two provinces)

- January, 2004 – Convened the first annual meeting of peer learning group coordinators for sharing of experiences and mutual learning
4. Continuing Education
 - June, 2003 – Approved all five proposals received to hold continuing education events for pastors (proposals were funded at a maximum of \$5,000 each and came from classes and CRCNA-related organizations)
 - December, 2003 – Approved six of 11 proposals for continuing education events
 5. Dissemination of Learning
 - July and December, 2003 - Shared reports with the Ministry Resource Center at Calvin College (the center is supported by another LEI grant)
 - May, 2003 – January, 2004 – Began project to produce a volume of essays concerning the pastoral vocation (chose an editor, solicited manuscripts from 10 pastor writers)
 6. Other Activities
 - February, 2003 – Hired Lis Van Harten as full-time Project Coordinator
 - May, 2003 – Convened a meeting to discuss how to reach pastors of small, rural or struggling churches with our program
 - December, 2003 - For project evaluation purposes, began developing questions for a survey of CRCNA pastors and other church leaders

Accomplishments

1. Peer Learning

We have been most pleased with *the participation in our peer learning group program and the quality and variety of topics being addressed* by the groups. In our proposal we envisioned funding seven groups a year. Instead, because of the level of interest in peer learning, we funded 28 groups our first year. We have already involved 21% of active pastors and 16% of congregations in the CRCNA.

That interest has meant we are able to provide less money per peer learning group, but we have found we're still able to adequately fund the best proposals. When we convened the first meeting of group coordinators last January, they were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the program. It was clear that they felt their members were helping each other grow not only cognitively but also spiritually and emotionally. And the group members' morale has been improved by the encouragement they received from each other.

What have the groups focused on? Several contracted to critique each others' preaching. One group of Hispanic pastors simply wanted to focus on issues their churches had in common in the state of Florida. Another, in Ontario, chose to explore the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Another group wanted to study worship and justice, and for this purpose we agreed to fund a visit to the Iona Community in Scotland. Still another chose to spend time in a nearby Roman Catholic monastery to focus on personal spiritual formation. A Korean pastors' group is addressing challenges they face as 1.5 generation immigrant leaders. All are finding that their meeting time is enriched by prayer and sharing of their challenges in ministry.

Here are a few quotes from peer learning group participants:

“Our first face to face meeting was last week. It went very well. All of the participants were blessed by our preaching, evaluation, discussions about preaching, and just talking in general about the joys and hassles of ministry.”

“This SPE program has been great for me. I’ve found that if I’m not intentionally learning, slowly but surely my well runs dry. SPE affords us a wonderful avenue to learn together and from each other. I very much appreciate this style of continual education . . . Surely, this blessing will filter down to our respective congregations.”

“Our group’s two-day kick-off retreat went great! On the subject of “Ministering in the Power of the Holy Spirit” we discovered that we represent a variety of backgrounds and initial opinions. Lots of enthusiasm for our monthly events was generated.”

2. Promotion

Our other biggest area of project satisfaction is *promotion of SPE within the denomination*. We knew we faced some risks. Other ministry leaders whose programs face funding cuts could look jealously at a sizable new pot of funding for something different. Or CRC constituents could give less to other denominational ministries on the mistaken assumption that LEI money was underwriting those ministries. So we worked hard to get the facts of the project out quickly and accurately. And because we wanted SPE to be associated with quality and responsiveness we devoted time at the beginning to creating an attractive logo, brochures and web site (www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence). We also devoted effort to using respected pastors and teachers for presentations about SPE throughout the denomination. The result is that our project is now generally known and its opportunities (and limits) understood. Our logo has generated not only instant recognition but also positive feelings through its use of the shepherd metaphor in a contemporary setting. Our project coordinator keeps the web site updated and is continually improving its accessibility to pastors and the general public.

Surprises and Challenges

As suggested by the previous section, our biggest, most pleasant surprise was the strong interest in peer learning, and consequently, the number of pastors who have participated already in our project.

As we have listened to pastors, what has become clear, however, is that it is not always so easy for them to gain their congregation’s support for spending time to meet and learn with other pastors. In fact, the whole nexus between pastor and congregation has risen in importance to us. To persevere, let alone thrive in ministry, the pastor needs the support of the congregation, especially its lay leaders. And to give support, these people must understand better than they now do what the pastor’s life is like, and what it takes for him or her to excel in ministry—including learning opportunities and sabbaticals. Trust between pastor and congregation is also essential. What generates that trust? Consequently, we have started to give more attention in our Implementation Team meetings to the pastor-congregation relationship. As a result, we’re communicating more to church councils; and we’re asking pastors to share their learning experiences with their parishioners.

We have also become even more aware how important the pastor-spouse relationship is. We can’t necessarily foster good marriages among pastors, but we can encourage pastors to include their spouses in their ministry learning (to the extent spouses wish to be).

One of our other challenges is to sustain participation by pastors in peer learning, mentoring, and continuing education as our SPE project continues. We are giving special attention to how we can interest and involve those pastors who tend not to try new things, or who are dispirited and thus hesitant about joining a group of their peers.

We have had a few disappointments: classes have not as yet shown much interest in our matching grant to fund regional pastors (mentors); some peer group coordinators are not very diligent about their financial and program reporting; and a couple of the continuing education events we sponsored had low attendance and inferior quality. We have discussed each of these disappointments and developed responses for them.

Adjustments

At the end of 2003 we created a document itemizing the various adjustments we had made in our project due to delays, feedback, and fresh insights. This is attached as Appendix III. Here we would like merely to cite some examples of those adjustments:

1. Promotion and Teaching

Issue: Confusion over differences between our peer learning and continuing education programs
Action: We clarified the distinction on the web site, at classis presentations, and in emails and phone calls

Issue: It wasn't clear to our public who was a "pastor" for eligibility purposes under our project
Action: We clarified that a pastor is someone who is ordained and pasturing a congregation, or an ordained evangelist (a CRC category) leading a congregation.

Issue: We intended to promote the program among pastors via special regional lunches
Action: Instead we made presentations at regularly scheduled classis meetings. This saved money, avoided extra travel for pastors, and made it easier to reach pastors of remote, rural churches.

Issue: Initially, all our materials were only in English, yet we have significant numbers of Korean and Hispanic pastors.
Action: We decided to translate our materials in Korean and Spanish.

2. Mentoring

Issue: We intended to hold retreats for new ministers in the spring of 2003
Action: It made more sense logistically and financially to instead host dinner conversations with groups of seminarians and their spouses.

Issue: We intended to hold a national conference for pastors in their first five years of ministry early in 2003
Action: We decided instead to hold a number of smaller roundtables throughout North America. This required more traveling on the part of staff, but the more intimate gatherings generated enthusiasm and good participation.

3. Peer Learning

Issue: We established no dollar limits for peer learning group proposals.
Action: We continued not to set dollar limits but suggested a desirable range for proposals while indicating flexibility where higher costs could be justified. We also encouraged groups to indicate where they could contribute their own matching or in-kind resources.

Issue: How to fairly decide among peer learning proposals
Action: We developed our formula for distributing approved proposals geographically and ethnically.

Issue: How to encourage peer learning groups to continue meeting *after* their SPE funding ends

Action: We decided to highlight the stories of those groups which *do* continue to meet without funding, and we identify and publicize the factors that encourage this continuation.

4. Continuing Education

Issue: We didn't anticipate that pastors and others would misinterpret the scope of our continuing education program

Action: We made clear on our web site and in documents and presentations that our continuing education funds were only intended to support group events, not the individual study plans of pastors. For the latter, we referred them to other denominational resources.

We intend to continue to reflect upon what we are learning—and to make necessary changes because of that reflection—through:

- Discussion at our monthly Implementation Team meetings
- Asking the help of the Advisory Board when it meets annually
- Getting feedback from peer learning group coordinators when we convene them annually

Evaluating Impact

Through our SPE project we hope to create and sustain a *culture* of pastoral excellence within the Christian Reformed Church. We have asked ourselves, “What are the components of such a culture and how do we measure them?” We think that we can collect some data on opinions and behaviors that will give us a picture of cultural change. But we understand that data alone is insufficient. We can also get a sense of the culture through stories and testimonies, and observations.

The key question for us is, “Are more and more Christian Reformed pastors displaying the marks of good ministry?” But also, “Has pastoral excellence become a priority for the congregations and the denomination?” And, “What helps us to know that it has become a priority?”

We are currently developing a survey instrument to help us collect both quantitative and qualitative information about pastoral excellence. The survey's sections will each relate to one of the marks of good ministry as we understand them. The survey will be sent to pastors and church council members later this year. Then we will reuse the survey instrument later in our SPE grant to compare results and determine whether there has been a change both in the culture and in pastors' behavior.

In addition to the survey, we will use the services of an outside evaluator in years three and five of our grant to assess program impact by interviewing pastors, congregations, and our own SPE leadership.

Finally, we will continue to ask peer group coordinators, regional pastors, and our Advisory Board for their judgment of whether we are indeed creating a culture of pastoral excellence—and ask for qualitative evidence of their views.

Plans and Sustainability

During the coming year we will continue to administer our current programs in mentoring, peer learning, and continuing education. We will also continue to promote understanding of excellence in pastoral ministry and the components of our project among CRC constituents. We will use the activities that have been mentioned earlier in this report.

But in addition to maintaining activities that have demonstrated their value early on, we will introduce some new activities this year:

- Training conference for mentors of new pastors to be held in the spring of 2004
- Introduction of a mentoring manual for use by both mentors and mentees
- Major presentation of SPE to the annual synod (governing body) of the CRCNA
- Publication in the summer of 2004 of a volume of essays, called *Persevering in Ministry: Pastors Tell Their Stories*
- Development of two significant training tools based on our first-year learning
- Personal contact with isolated or uninvolved pastors to encourage their participation in SPE
- Offering of a new seminary-level course in February and July, “The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry”

Our intent is that through demonstrating the value of the analysis and activities introduced through SPE, the CRCNA will develop sustainable practices that produce spiritually healthy and imaginative congregational leadership. We think pastors can and will develop their own plans for lifelong learning and will be both encouraged and held accountable by their councils and their colleagues. Classes will designate resources for important mentoring relationships and for regional pastors, and churches and denominational agencies will develop opportunities for continuing education and will facilitate them in various regions. These practices will make pastoral excellence a core value in our denomination.

To sustain pastoral excellence in the CRCNA we may or may not need new funding streams in the future. This is not yet clear. But part of the Advisory Board’s agenda in November, 2004, will be focused on how to sustain the SPE program in the future, including whether certain of its components should receive denominational funding. Our proposal to LEI said that after the external evaluation is completed in year three of the grant, we would “vigorously pursue ways to put the most valuable and successful programs of this initiative on a long-term financial footing.” This would include “developing a proposal to the CRCNA Foundation to sustain the most successful of these initiatives beyond year five.” We remain committed to this course.

APPENDIX I

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

January 2003 – January 2004

1. The number of peer learning groups of pastoral leaders that have been formed so far: **28**
2. The number of pastoral leaders that are now taking part in a group: **180**

The number of pastoral leaders that are taking part in other program activities:

Number who have attended continuing education events: 93

Number who have attended regional pastor conferences: 45

Number who have attended mentoring roundtables: 112

Total: 250

3. The number of congregations that these leaders represent:

- 161 - in peer learning groups
- 45 - in regional pastor conferences
- 112 - in mentoring roundtables
- 58 - in continuing education events

Total: 377 (out of 1025 total)

4. The number of lay leaders from congregations that have been involved with our project: **73**

APPENDIX II

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLISHED GRANT PRODUCTS

November 2002 – January 2004

- November, 2002 announcement of grant in Banner
- January, 2003 letterhead
- April, 2003 promotional flyer
- May, 2003 ad in Banner
- May, 2003 ad in Christian Courier
- July, 2003 ad in Banner
- July, 2003 ad in Christian Courier
- July, 2003 article in Christian Courier “Sustaining Excellence in Pastors” – Lis Van Harten
- August, 2003 postcards printed
- August, 2003 stickers printed
- August, 2003 power point presentation
- August, 2003 handouts for classis presentations
- August, 2003 article in *Thrive!* – “Excellent Pastors” – Lis Van Harten
- September, 2003 article in Banner – “Pastoral Excellence Grants Promote Peer Learning, Continuing Education” – Paul Delger
- September, 2003 ad in Banner
- September, 2003 ad in Christian Courier
- September, 2003 article in Banner – “Leading Through Change” – Kathy Smith
- September, 2003 envelopes printed
- October, 2003 ad in Banner
- October, 2003 ad in Christian Courier
- October, 2003 article in Christian Courier – “Healthy Pastors for Stronger Churches” - Rachel Van Harmelen
- November, 2003 ad in Banner
- November, 2003 ad in Christian Courier
- December, 2003 ad in Banner
- December, 2003 ad in Christian Courier
- January, 2004 article in Banner – “How Congregations Can Sustain Pastoral Excellence” – Duane Kelderman
- January, 2004 article in *Ministry Report to Classes and Councils*

APPENDIX III

ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO PROGRAM

January 2003 – January 2004

1. Delays

a. Promotion and teaching

Plan: *“brochures and ads designed in November/December, 2002”*

Delay: Brochures were designed and produced in January 2003. They were sent out in a February mailing to pastors and church councils. The ads weren't needed, and therefore weren't produced, until March 2003.

Plan: *“kick off lunches held winter/spring of 2003 – to be held in the 11 major pockets of CRCNA churches”*

Delay: Some lunches were held early in 2003 but we changed our strategy to doing presentations at the 47 classis meetings instead. Almost all pastors attend classis meetings anyway, so this approach didn't require them to make an extra trip to a special meeting--especially when many of them are pressed for time and required to travel long distances to meetings.

Plan: *“first monograph written and published fall 2003/spring 2004 – second monograph written and published fall 2004/spring 2005”*

Delay: It was decided that we would produce one monograph in the spring of 2004 rather than two in consecutive years. This would allow us more funds to produce a quality book with eight to ten contributors.

Plan: *“seminary course held in two locations summer 2003”*

Delay: Due to the lengthy process involved in getting seminary approval for the course, it wasn't offered in the summer of 2003. The course will be offered ten times during the five year grant period as the proposal states.

b. Peer Learning

Plan: *“peer learning proposals solicited in November 2002”*

Delay: This was done in February 2003. The program hadn't been developed to the point where proposals could be solicited in November.

Plan: *“peer learning proposals reviewed and selected December 2002”*

Delay: The deadline dates for peer learning proposals were changed to May 1st (announced by June 1st) and November 1st (announced by December 1st). It wasn't possible to make decisions on proposals in December 2002, as the first announcement of the program didn't go out until February 2003. We decided to make decisions on proposals semiannually because it seemed to represent a happy medium between annual consideration on the one hand and ongoing review of proposals on the other.

c. Continuing Education

Plan: *“continuing education applications due December 2002 – grant awards announced in January 2003”*

Delay: The deadline dates for continuing education proposals were changed to June 1st (announced by July 1st) and December 1st (announced by January 1st). It wasn't possible to make decisions on proposals in December 2002, as the first announcement of the program didn't go out until February 2003. We decided to make decisions on proposals semiannually because, as for peer learning, it seemed to represent a happy medium between annual consideration on the one hand and ongoing review of proposals on the other.

d. Mentoring

Plan: *“the application documents approved by synod for use by pastors and congregations to covenant together regarding the pastor's continuing education will be updated and distributed with the brochure (in February 2003) This was not done.*

Delay: The documents continue to be worked on. They'll be distributed to the pastors and congregations upon completion.

Plan: *“hold a national conference for regional pastors March-May 2003”*

Delay: The date was changed to October 2003. The regional pastors will be informed about the matching grants for regional pastors at this time.

2. Clarifications

a. Promotion and teaching

Issue: There was confusion over the differences between the peer learning and continuing education programs.

Action: We clarified the distinction on the web site, at classis presentations, and in emails and phone calls.

Issue: It wasn't clear to whom we were referring when we used the term “pastor”. We didn't think through who a pastor was (e.g., does “pastor” include non-ordained pastors, youth pastors, evangelists?).

Action: We clarified that a pastor is someone who is ordained and pasturing (leading) a congregation **or** is an ordained evangelist who is pasturing a congregation.

Issue: No deadlines were given for grant proposals in the early months. We started thinking that we would deal with proposals each month. It became apparent that this wasn't going to work. We were receiving more proposals than we originally had expected.

Action: It was decided in early March to make the PL deadlines May 1st and November 1st and the CE deadlines June 1st and December 1st. Grants would be announced one month after the deadlines. This has been a good decision for all involved.

b. Peer Learning

Issue: There were no dollar limits established for PL grants. This has caused some confusion with the applicants. They don't want to budget too high and then be turned down.

Action: We continue not to specify a dollar limit, but we do informally suggest an appropriate range for proposals. We also encourage moderation, on the grounds that we want to fund as many groups as we can. And we encourage groups to make their own in-kind contributions as way to promote self-sufficiency.

Issue: Consideration hadn't been given to the inclusion of pastors' spouses in the proposals.

Action: We encourage spousal involvement through conversations with applicants, on the web site, and through promotional presentations.

Issue: Can a pastor be part of more than one PL group?

Action: It was decided that they couldn't. However, a member in one group could help get another group started.

Issue: There were no clear guidelines for the treasurers as to how the financial reporting was to be completed.

Action: Guidelines were established and communicated to the treasurers soon after the grants were awarded (for the November round).

Issue: How to encourage peer learning groups to continue meeting *after* their SPE funding ends.

Action: We decided to highlight the stories of those groups which *do* continue to meet without funding, and we identify and publicize the factors that encourage this continuation.

c. Continuing Education

Issue: Can non CRC organizations or providers host a CE event?

Action: It was decided that this is acceptable as long as the attending pastors are predominately CRC.

Issue: There was confusion whether CE funding was available for individual pastors to further their education.

Action: While our literature makes clear that this isn't what the grants are for, we've made further clarifications on our web site, in our documents, and in any presentations or communication.

d. Mentoring

Issue: There were no guidelines as to how the funding for the regional pastor grants would be dispersed.

Action: It was decided that we would offer grants for up to three years. The maximum amount of the first year grant will be \$15,000. Year two of the grant will be 66% of year one's grant. Year three of the grant will be 33% of year one's grant.

3. Changes

a. Promotion and teaching

Issue: We said that we would *"have 20 lunches with 20 pastors attending each one for a total cost of \$6,000"*.

Action: This was changed to having a presentation done at each of the 47 classes, although some lunches were held as stated in the proposal. We paid for meals at some of the meetings. We made this change so that we could reach all pastors in the CRC with a personal touch. This helps the smaller, remote churches feel connected.

b. Mentoring

Issue: We said that we would *"hold retreats for new ministers March-May 2003"*.

Action: This was changed from a retreat to a senior seminarian and spouse's dinner. There wasn't enough time to get a retreat together. The dinners worked out well and will be continued for the remaining years of the grant. We'll consider another meeting or dinner around graduation time for those who couldn't make the first dinners. There was \$24,500 for these retreats for 2003. There'll be excess funds due to the change. The excess will likely be used for the "First Five Years Retreat." (There'll be excess funds each year of the grant.)

Issue: We said that we would *"hold a national conference for pastors in their 1st five years of ministry March-May 2003"*.

Action: It was decided to have regional round table meetings with smaller groups. This will allow for more in depth and personal meetings between mentors and mentees. There are going to be 20-25 meetings held before the end of 2003. Each meeting will have three to ten mentors and mentees, with possibly a regional pastor as well. Any pastors who are in the first five years of their ministry and don't have a mentor, will also be invited. There'll be phone conferences for those who are unable to attend a meeting.

Issue: We said that *"each year after year one we will award regional pastor grants"*

Action: This was changed to accepting applications and awarding grants in the first year. There were inquiries about submitting applications in 2003. We decided to use funds allocated to 2004 to cover any grants approved in 2003. The total amount budgeted for these grants will remain the same.

c. Budget

Issue: We said that we would *"place 5 ads @ \$1,000 each and 20 ads @ \$500 each in CRC publications in 2003 (for a total of \$15,000)"*.

Action: We changed this amount to \$8,000 for 2003. This will pay for 6 ads in the Banner and 6 ads in the Christian Courier. The 25 ads suggested in the proposal were excessive.

Issue: We said that a *"contract writer would be hired; \$10,000 budgeted for 2003"*.

Action: This was reduced to \$3,500. Much of the work that the contract writer was to do (web site, promotion) was done by SPE staff.

Issue: We budgeted *"instructive promotional brochures at \$10,000"*.

Action: We reduced this to \$7,500. The total cost for the brochures was less than expected.

Issue: We budgeted “web design start up costs at \$16,000”.
Action: We reduced this to \$2,000 as costs were much lower than we’d expected.

Issue: There was an excellent response of PL proposals for the May 1 deadline. As a result, the budgeted amount for PL grants for the first round were insufficient.
Action: In the budget we moved \$40,000 from CE (from years 2004-07) to 2003 PL funds. This added \$20,000 for each PL round of proposals in 2003.

Issue: We had hoped to receive \$48,640 a year from Pastor/Church Relations continuing education fund (in-kind funds). This was reduced to \$20,000 for 2003.
Action: We have less money for our peer learning grants due to this reduction.

Issue: The budgeted amount for PL proposals in 2003 was going to be inadequate (we underestimated the response).
Action: We received approval from Lilly Endowment in May 2003 to move \$70,000 from other budgeted areas to PL proposals.

4. New Insights

a. Promotion and Teaching

Insight: We had all our materials in English only. This was difficult for some Spanish and Korean pastors to work with.

Action: We’ve translated the materials into Spanish and Korean. This is much appreciated by the Hispanic and Korean pastors.

Insight: We felt there was a need to make a special effort to reach smaller, remote churches.

Action: This is being done through SPE and other denominational representatives attending classis meetings. SPE is working with Larry Meyer and Peter De Vries (small church specialists). An article was written for *Thrive!* (a newsletter for smaller churches).

b. Peer Learning

Insight: We hadn’t considered that it might be necessary to accommodate to differences in PL proposals caused by the ethnicity of the group.

Action: It was decided that if a proposal is received from a non-majority culture group, we’d seek the advice of a CRC pastor from that culture.

5 a. Promotion and Teaching

Issue: There’s been a concern expressed that some CRC members think the Lilly grant underwrites the CRCNA’s general budget.

Needed: SPE works harder at communicating that Lilly funds are used for programs that supplement existing denominational ministries and they do not financially support those ministries.

Issue: In time the SPE program may be taken for granted or even overlooked. How do we sustain awareness of and interest in the grant among CRC pastors and churches?

Needed: SPE uses existing plans, but also stresses success stories and one-on-one contact with pastors and classical leaders.

b. Peer Learning

Issue: We may be faced with an explosion of PL proposals on the one hand or, on the other, a marked drop in their number.

Needed: SPE develops contingency plans.

c. Peer Learning/Continuing Education

Issue: How do we encourage PL groups to become self-sufficient after their grant ends?
How do we encourage organizations to continue hosting CE events without the help of SPE funding?

Needed: SPE highlights the stories of those who *do* continue without funding. SPE identifies the factors that encourage this continuation, and publicizes them.

d. General Issues

Issue: We need to start preparing for the end of the grant in 2007. What is the possibility of the CRCNA generating sufficient funds to continue the program?

Needed: SPE makes the case with the Board of Trustees for what has been accomplished through SPE and for what deserves ongoing denominational funding. SPE also explores new grant opportunities.

Issue: The SPE grant admirably addresses the needs of full-time, ordained pastors in congregational ministry. But other key people – some ordained, some not – are also engaged in ministry alongside pastors. We've sometimes found it hard to distinguish between their needs and those of pastors. And we've seen that they too are key leaders in ministry – and are growing in number.

Needed: SPE urges Lilly to consider people in specialized ministry for future assistance. SPE also seeks new ways to include them in our current programs.