

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project Report
Lilly Endowment Inc.
February – December 2007

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

Project Activities

Following are the major activities we have undertaken in the past year. They are grouped under our five areas of programming.

1. Promotion and Teaching

- 2007 – Designed and placed four advertisements concerning the project in Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) related publications
- 2007 – Sent informational packets on the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) project to newly ordained pastors
- February and June 2007 – SPE/Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) course, “The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry”, offered in Surrey, British Columbia and Grand Rapids, Michigan respectively – 27 pastors/seminarians attended
- February – December 2007 – Commissioned seven articles on the pastoral vocation that were published in CRCNA-related publications
- March and July 2007 – Two articles written by non-staff about the CRCNA-SPE project that were published in CRCNA-related publications
- March – September 2007 – Four articles written by staff about the CRCNA-SPE project that were published in CRCNA-related publications
- April 2007 – Presentation of SPE project at Korean Institute for Ministry conference
- April and September 2007 – Presentation of SPE project at Home Missions’ conference
- June 2007 - Display board at Synod (the governing body of the CRCNA)
- June 2007 - Display board at Multi-Ethnic Conference
- August – September 2007 – Invitations to fall pastors’ spouses’ retreats sent to every CRCNA pastors’ spouse
- September 2007 – Letter sent to churches informing them that their pastors are members of a peer learning (PL) group
- September 2007 - Postcards sent to all pastors and clerks of council announcing new SPE grant and programming
- September 2007 - Postcards sent to all pastors’ spouses announcing new SPE grant and programming for pastors’ spouses
- October 2007 – Presentation of SPE project at regional pastors’ conference
- December 2007 - Flyers sent to US classes promoting National Clergy Renewal Grants

2. Mentoring

- 2007 – Mentors assigned to new pastors within six months of their ordination or installation as a CRC pastor
- January – December 2007 – Mentoring advisory group met four times to discuss mentoring in the CRCNA
- April and May 2007 – Hosted two dinners for CTS senior seminarians and their spouses to present information about the CRCNA’s mentoring program
- October 2007 – Hosted biannual regional pastors’ conference

3. Peer Learning (PL)
 - May 2007 – Approved seven proposals to fund one-year peer learning groups among pastors (approved proposals involved 56 pastors and 52 congregations – 58% of pastors are new to SPE PL groups)
 - November 2007 – Approved seventeen proposals to fund one-year peer learning groups among pastors (approved proposals involved 135 pastors and 121 congregations – 30 % of pastors are new to SPE PL groups)
 - November 2007 – Convened the fifth annual meeting of PL group coordinators for sharing of experiences and mutual learning

4. Continuing Education
 - February –December 2007 – 43 continuing education events held with 440 pastors (plus those linked by computer distance learning), 1,077 laypersons, and 661 congregations participating
 - June 2007 – Approved six proposals to fund continuing education events (approved proposals will hold 9 events in five states)
 - December 2007 – Approved 15 proposals to fund continuing education events (approved proposals will hold 29 events in seven states and three provinces)

5. Dissemination of Learning
 - 2007 – Work continued on 2007 *significant training tool* on marriage and ministry
 - February 2007 – Posted story on grantee on web site
 - February – December 2007 – Shared reports with Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW – the institute is supported by another LEI grant) and the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP – the center is supported by donors)
 - April 2007 – Granted permission to the Salvation Army to reprint two CRCNA SPE articles “*Smaller Churches Have Big Appeal*” and “*Smaller Churches Measure up Big*”
 - May 2007 – Submitted the 2006 report to LEI
 - May 2007 – 2006 annual report sent to Advisory Board
 - May 2007 - *Persevering in Ministry, Speaking of Pastors*, and “Effective Leadership in the Church” distributed to 2007 ministry candidates
 - June 2007 – *Persevering in Ministry* distributed to those taking “The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry” course
 - August 2007 - Four CRCNA-SPE representatives attended SPE conference in Indianapolis
 - August 2007 – CRCNA SPE project display at SPE conference in Indianapolis
 - August 2007 – Granted permission to Wesley Theological Seminary to use two case studies from “Effective Leadership in the Church”
 - August 2007 – Granted permission to the Nebraska Pastoral Excellence Program to adapt “Closing Well – Continuing Strong” for use with Disciples of Christ pastors
 - September 2007 - *Persevering in Ministry, Speaking of Pastors*, and “Effective Leadership in the Church” used as texts in two Calvin Theological Seminary classes
 - October 2007 – Reprinted 4,000 copies of “Effective Leadership in the Church”
 - October 2007 – Reprinted 3,000 copies of *Preserving in Ministry*
 - November 2007 – Advisory Board meeting held
 - November 2007 – Report on second survey presented to Advisory Board
 - November 2007 – Presentation on project to date given at Advisory Board meeting
 - December 2007 – Report on external evaluation presented to CRCNA Ministry Council
 - January 2008 – Mailed LEI all 2007 CRCNA SPE published items
 - February 2008 – Report on external evaluation presented to CRCNA Board of Trustees

6. Other Activities

- February 2007 – Hosted retirement seminar for pastors and spouses
- March 2007 – Second SPE survey sent to all senior pastors and clerks of council
- May – September 2007 – External evaluation of SPE project conducted by Sue Weber
- Fall 2007 – Hosted two “Church Visitor Study” events
- September - November 2007 – Eight regional pastors’ spouses’ retreats held with 134 spouses attending
- November 2007 – Report on second SPE survey completed
- November 2007 – Report on external evaluation completed

Impact

One of the requirements for all grants we award is the completion of reports. It is through these reports that we most often see the impact the grant has had on the participants. Comments reflecting the impact confirm that our project is indeed helping pastors to sustain pastoral excellence.

1. *The New England Green Space Peer Learning Group*

Six pastors from three New England states make up the *New England Green Space* peer learning group. Their definition of pastoral excellence is “a relational journey towards being the best pastors [they] can be with the help, strength, and gifts of God.” * Their relational journey is experienced by finding green spaces in their lives by means of exploration (mutual gatherings to discuss their progress in spiritual disciplines), expeditions (major hikes in three different states), and excursions (two opportunities to focus on journaling). The group will end this portion of their life’s relational journey by participating in a ropes course that focuses on spiritual formation.

Together the group has wrestled with the question, *Why is it so hard to be disciplined about spiritual things?* They have learned that “information does not always lead to transformation”. Their greatest reward has been getting together and sharing life while their relationships are deepening. And they claim that the best part of the journey has been the sense of partnership and community within the group. This is very important to these five pastors as they are geographically isolated from each other and other CRC pastors.

One of their expeditions was to Martha’s Vineyard. During the 36 hours together, the pastors engaged in the spiritual disciplines of solitude, spiritual journaling, and lectio divina. Each pastor shared some personal highlights. Tony said, “After a short time in prayer, I felt the presence of God as though He was looking down on me. It is hard to describe how I felt: reassured, whole, small, affirmed.” Ryan shared that, “My journaling and solitude time was some of the most intense moments I have [had] with God in quite some time.” And Mike reported, “The green space excursion to Martha’s Vineyard was a great chance to breathe for a moment while learning about each other as well as from each other. Trips like these always benefit me for the perspective they give..... Time for me. Time for each other. Time for God. How can you beat that?”

The intentional time the pastors are spending with God and each other is nurturing pastoral excellence in their lives, their congregations, and their ministry.

* All quotes are taken from *New England Green Space* reports.

2. *The Pastors of Large Rural Churches Peer Learning Group*

Located in the Heartland is a group of nine pastors who are pastoring large rural churches in depopulating settings. Together they are able to learn from and support each other as they face the common issues of plateaued or declining congregations.

The pastors travel from three states to meet quarterly. Some of the issues that they are wrestling with are:

- What is the place of the rural church in the fabric of today's culture?
- How do the pastors help their theologically conservative constituency fit in an increasingly urban and progressive CRC?
- How do pastoral families work through challenges that result from living in a rural setting? Challenges such as; spouses unable to pursue a career due to the rural environment, and families wanting to be close to *city life* for its conveniences.

In order to address these concerns, and others, the peer group hosted a conference on the "Can Do's of Rural Ministry". (An SPE continuing education grant funded this event.) Seventeen pastors and spouses attended the event. "The conference gave all participants attitudes and skills that give them hope for the future of their church and ministry." *

In addition to the learning the group is enjoying, it values the mutual support, encouragement, and prayer they share. "It is a high priority. This is one place where we ...share the same challenges—challenges that are somewhat different from colleagues who serve urban churches." One pastor said, "I am more encouraged and content in my ministry. Our prayer time for one another [is] precious to each person."

It is encouraging to hear that the elders of the group coordinator's church suggested the formation of this peer group. As a result of the pastor's group participation, the "congregation is more content, peaceful, and focused." This is a clear indication that congregations are being impacted by SPE.

Perhaps the most significant comment we have received to date, related to the impact of SPE on congregations, comes out of this group. The elders of one of the group's pastors asked, "him to leave two years ago, but after being invigorated by our group, and the conference, and implementing some of the things we have come up with together, his council told him he can stay as long as he likes—even up to retirement. What peace this brought to him, his wife, and the church he serves!"

These pastors are committed to sustaining their group after SPE funding ends.

* All quotes are taken from *Pastors of Large Rural Churches* reports.

Personal Assessment

1. What We Are Learning

Perhaps the most significant learning of this past year or so has been concerning pastors' spouses. In 2004 we began to hear repeated comments from pastors' spouses concerning the need for support and encouragement. This resulted in the formation of the *Pastors' Spouses' Task Force*—which is made up of nine pastors' spouses. Our first project was to host a bi-national conference in November 2006. One hundred and thirty-six spouses attended the event. Enthusiastic feedback encouraged us to continue our work with spouses. We then planned and hosted eight regional events during the fall of 2007. One of the 138 attendees wrote on her evaluation form, "Thank you, thank you, thank you for putting this together. What a warm, loving and safe place for us to gather." Three additional retreats are planned for the spring of 2008.

One of the task force members has a ministry, Soulcare, to the spouses of seminarians attending Calvin Theological Seminary. Seeing the importance of encouraging and supporting "pastors' spouses", even in this early stage, led us to fund the 2007 spring and fall programming of

Soulcare. When the spring term ended a large stack of handmade cards arrived in the SPE office. One read, “I want to thank you for supporting the ministry of Soulcare. As a soon-to-be pastors’ wife, I have learned so much that I can take with me into future ministry.”

All of the above programming for pastors’ spouses was made possible from the interest money earned on our initial grant. When we were invited by Lilly to submit a second proposal we decided that part of our request would be for pastors’ spouses. Opportunities for spouses will include: bi-national conferences, peer groups, and learning events for pastoral couples. The response to date has been very encouraging. We received 10 proposals for the first round of peer group proposals which involves 67 spouses from 57 congregations. Plans are going well for the fall conference to be held in Grand Rapids. As we encourage and support pastors’ spouses, they in turn will be able to encourage and support their spouses—the pastors.

It would not be accurate to say that we are *learning* that pastors are grateful for SPE and the funding that Lilly Endowment Inc. has generously given to the CRC for its implementation. However, we continue to hear expressions of gratitude and want to share just a few here.

- You’ve given us a great gift. We applaud your work and sing your praises!
- Thank you for making a difference in the lives of pastors, their congregations, the Christian Reformed denomination, and the body of Jesus Christ.
- Thank you. Thank you for the vision. Thank you for the generosity.
- For all those involved with the SPE program, we extend our deepest and most sincere thanks. Your work in making this program a possibility has blessed five men’s lives in ways you probably will never know.

2. Strategy for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

The strategy for sustaining pastoral excellence that has worked best in our project is to help pastors approach their work *communally* with other pastors, particularly through peer learning groups. In a culture that tends to have an understanding that pastors *go it alone* in a vocation with many responsibilities, peer groups provide community for those in ministry. It is vital to the health of our pastors, and ultimately their congregations, that they know they do not need to be alone in ministry. One Korean pastor explained, “The Korean culture is different in that pastors want to be isolated, however since introducing the peer learning group a sense of, and appreciation for, community and collegiality has emerged for the first time.” Another pastor reported, “We have overcome the myth that if you wanted to get together for support there was something wrong with you. We are sustaining the health of the ministry.”

If pastors are to be sustained in pastoral excellence, they need to experience community with peers. However, quite often pastors say that they are too busy to commit to getting together with peers on a regular basis or that they tried meeting with a group in the past without much success. One pastor reported, “I became involved in an SPE group with a certain amount of skepticism. Over the course of a quarter century of ministry, I’ve taken part in almost every form of continuing education. But I’m convinced that SPE is the most significant program for pastors that the CRC has introduced during my years of service. SPE has the power to transform pastoral DNA. It overcomes the isolation that has been a trademark of ordained ministry in the denomination. And it challenges pastors with a form of continuing education that is more than intellectual. SPE gets to heart issues that continue the work of healthy pastoral formation. SPE will certainly have a ripple effect in the CRC. The spiritual vitality it nurtures in pastors helps create the leadership needed for the denomination to pursue its goal of healthy congregations.”

The CRCNA launched a new program, Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE), in the summer of 2007. Its purpose is to support and strengthen congregations so they can be used by God to transform lives and communities. SCE is modeled after SPE and has had an encouraging launch. We consider SCE and SPE as complementary programs as both directly or indirectly sustain pastors and congregations. One pastor said, “We see that we need the spiritual community of our [peer group]. Healthier pastors will make for healthier churches.” The fact that some individuals contacting our office are not clear which program will suit their needs tells us that the two are indeed intertwined.

To date over half of CRC pastors have joined an SPE PL group. The pastors involved in the groups have come to appreciate both the community experienced and the importance of that community. Increasingly we are hearing comments such as, “We have continued to meet long after our money [was gone]. We have enjoyed the fellowship so much we did not want to give up on this opportunity.” In the nine months that SCE has been offered to congregations, 141 have received grants and 78 have sent a pastor and church leader to learning events. As in the SPE peer groups, attendees have expressed an appreciation for the community experienced and acknowledged its importance.

In addition to SCE, we are actively pursuing other viable options for financially sustaining the best parts of our current SPE programming. As noted in our grant proposal, we were hoping, and indeed have begun, to work with the CRCNA’s Leadership Exchange (referred to as the Leadership Institute in the proposal). This new initiative will focus on leadership within the local congregation, both lay and ordained (pastoral). Although the Exchange is in its early stages, a board has recently been appointed and some planning and fund-raising has begun. Already excitement and enthusiasm about the potential to sustain SPE pastor peer groups is evident. This is very encouraging to us. As plans continue to fall into place, we look forward to fruitful discussions with the Exchange.

3. What Has Not Worked Well

As communicated in last year’s report, we are very pleased with all aspects of our project to date except for the regional pastor (RP) matching grants we offer. In our denominational structure, regional pastors are experienced pastors who counsel and otherwise support all pastors in their classis. In most cases they do this in addition to serving their own congregation.

We wanted to strengthen this system by testing the benefits of relieving regional pastors of some of their duties by providing the classis with a part-time person whose salary would be covered by a grant and matching funds from the classis. But we have not realized the results we were hoping for. We believe the reason why the RP grants have not had the same success as the other parts of the project is because of the required matching funds. Many of the classes just do not have the funds. As one pastor said, “Our classis doesn’t have two nickels to rub together.”

We originally budgeted \$250,000 for the RP grants. By the spring of 2006, only 60% of the funds had been awarded. We had decided in the early stages of the grant that all the RP grants would be awarded by the end of 2006. Therefore we potentially had 40% of the budget underutilized.

In response to the potential excess funds, we requested, and received, a reallocation of \$100,000 of the RP grant funds to cover four program areas: retirement seminars, regional pastor activities, pastors’ spouses’ initiatives, and “church visiting”.

- a) The retirement seminars are assisting pastors nearing retirement as they make the necessary transitions out of the parish. The training tool “Closing Well—Continuing Strong” is used as a resource. Additional seminars are planned for 2008.

- b) The regional pastor activities are gatherings to assess the current structure the regional pastors' work and to determine if changes would improve this form of support for pastors. A final report will be produced in 2008.
- c) The pastors' spouses' initiatives included eight regional events for pastors' spouses during the fall. One hundred and thirty-four spouses attended. Three additional retreats are planned for the spring of 2008.
- d) The "church visiting" piece is identifying ways in which the current system, where two pastors from each judicatory regularly visit local congregations, can be improved on. This programming will continue into 2008.

All of the above program areas are, and will continue to, sustain pastors and pastoral excellence.

4. Program Changes

We have made a couple of program changes in response to our ongoing evaluation of the project. In the spring of 2005, we had veteran peer learning (PL) group members contact over 200 pastors who had not yet participated in an SPE PL group. These PL recruiters were not part of our original plan. The idea came about as a result of seeing the success of the PL program and the impact that it was having on the participating pastors. We realized that those pastors who were the "movers and the shakers" were the ones who had taken the initiative to form peer groups up to that point in time. We wanted to reach out to those pastors who may have needed some personal encouragement to consider submitting a PL proposal. This effort resulted in five new peer groups within a couple of months.

Related to peer leaning groups is an increased flexibility, on our part, for group membership. In the beginning we held quite firmly to the parameters that we had put into place such as; four to eight pastors in a group, and members needed to be CRC ordained pastors in parish ministry. As with most things in life, one size does not fit all. By relaxing our requirements more pastors have had the opportunity to be nurtured, encouraged, and supported in peer groups. And by permitting non-CRC pastors to join the groups, the overall health of both CRC pastors and the denomination potentially will be renewed. In addition to this change, we are seeing an increased number of peer groups with spouses participating. These groups are fostering healthier marriages and ultimately, healthier congregations. We saw opportunities for pastoral couples as vital and in response wrote programming into our renewal grant program for them.

It was our intent to host a bi-national mentoring conference in the spring of 2007 for mentors, mentees, and their spouses. While the conference we hosted in April 2006 was appreciated by those who attended, we felt that having smaller, regional events would allow for more interaction among the attendees. The format of the conference was, for the most part, plenary sessions with very little opportunity for interpersonal sharing of experiences and challenges. The format of the smaller regional events will allow for a richer, more intimate experience for the participants. Pastors themselves determine who will take part in the gatherings. We feel this will result in greater participation by the attendees. Three such events are planned for early 2008.

And finally, as noted in the previous section, we have made changes to the regional pastor grants program.

Theological Understanding

In our reports over the last couple of years, we have talked about the theological understandings that have been emerging in our project. These understandings continue to be evident and will, we believe, contribute to sustaining a culture of pastoral excellence in the Christian Reformed Church.

1. Character

To those who participate in our SPE programs the ongoing formation of their character in Christ increasingly becomes a priority, even though it is not necessarily so at the beginning of their SPE experience. When pastors complete a PL group proposal they are asked to list what their spiritual formation goals are. We receive a surprisingly large number of proposals where this question is not answered. When pressed for a response, the pastors sometimes ask, “What are you looking for?”

Some pastors assume that spiritual formation happens in their congregational life, others that it is an individual matter between them and God, but they soon discover rich opportunities for spiritual growth as they share their struggles, hopes, and yearnings with their peers. It has been gratifying to those of us who lead the SPE project to see this occur.

Over the past five years of the project there has been a shift of focus in continuing education proposals submitted. In the early years, the focus was on new learning or enhancing skills. Increasingly it is on character development and pastoral identity. There is a sense that pastors start out by thinking what they need is *technique* but what they really need is God—who they are in relationship with Him rather than what they are competent to do.

2. Renewal

Pastors are in constant need of renewal (physical, spiritual and academic) and re-equipping (gaining of skills). The demands of ministry are great. If pastors are not renewed and re-equipped, they can easily become overwhelmed. Almost without exception our PL groups experience renewal in significant ways. After meeting for some time pastors are asked how their grant will make a difference in their life, ministry, and church a year from now. Pastors said:

- “The group will continue to enjoy networking with each other more often than otherwise possible. This allows us to share joys and concerns as well as practical resources (e.g., liturgical material, sermon ideas, life experience). We have also developed a certain level of accountability among ourselves. In addition, our meetings “put wind in our sails,” so to speak, that greatly encourages us in our ministry settings and helps prevent cynicism and/or apathy and/or burnout. “
- “The difference we see is that we will have had the ability to face the demands of ministry in community with persons who understand and share this challenge. This is empowering and has already resulted in some very honest assessment of where we currently are and request for assistance in achieving growth goals in the years to come.”

We are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of renewal being done in community. In 2005, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) began its *Formation for Ministry* program which has students engaging in a number of activities and opportunities including peer groups and mentoring relationships. Ongoing education is strongly encouraged. It is hoped that by the time students graduate, these renewal experiences are a part of their identity and that they will continue to participate in them. This is where SPE programming steps in. Pastors can join a peer group, enter a mentoring relationship with a more experienced pastor, and attend continuing education events. Together CTS and SPE encourage ongoing renewal in our pastors.

3. Change in Practices

We have noticed a number of changes in practice that are resulting from pastors' SPE experiences. These include such things as better boundaries, healthier balances between work and leisure, broadening the scope of books read, and deeper prayer lives. We have noticed an increase in pastors writing sermons in community. Several PL groups have focused on sermon writing. Some of these groups had their members preach a sermon in each of the churches represented in the group. This allowed the congregations to experience and appreciate several pastors while allowing the pastors to experience worship in a variety of churches. It also allowed the pastors to cut down on their sermon preparation for a few weeks—which they enjoyed! One group reported, “We [the pastors in the group] and six of the churches our classis [regional judiciary] have been blessed by our series of sermons that we were able to preach in them. The pastors of the six churches each prepared a sermon on one of the seven churches in Revelation and preached that at each of the six churches.”

The importance of healthier balances between work and leisure continues to be recognized. Peer groups are certainly one avenue through which this is encouraged. A pastor reported, “Over thirty years of ministry, I developed an unhealthy physical and spiritual rhythm of frequently working seven days a week. I constantly compromised my personal time with God for the demands of ministry. I had been walking perilously close to burn out. When I first came across the book, “Sacred Rhythms” by Ruth Haley Barton, I read it from cover to cover but I skipped over the “exercises” at the conclusion of each chapter. I read the book – as I read most books – for spiritual information rather than transformation. Being involved in the “Transforming Community [peer group]”, however, I have been required during the each retreat to participate in the “exercises” while my peer learning group holds me accountable. This changes everything.”

Pastors' spouses and families benefit from a spouse/parent with a healthy work and leisure balance. One peer group made up of pastoral couples feels strongly about this. They have been hard at work on the 2007 SPE significant training tool on *Marriage and Ministry*. The following excerpt is taken from the chapter, “Marriage and Ministry Takes Balance”. “A pastor can build some margin into his or her life by taking a regular day off. The day off is different from a Sabbath—a day of prayer and spiritual restoration. The day off is not Sunday, when the pastor is leading worship services. A day off is another day of the week for life maintenance, to spend time with your spouse, pay the bills, get the car repaired, work on projects and hobbies, work out at the gym, and give attention to personal finances. As the pastor helps out on the home front, the marriage will be strengthened.” *Marriage and Ministry* will be published by the summer of 2008.

The theological discussion about pastoral excellence will continue in the years to come. Increasingly pastors and congregations are becoming aware of the SPE project and the impact that it is having. Our 2007 survey indicated that:

- 83% of pastors surveyed say that SPE is having a positive/very positive effect on the culture of the CRCNA
- 80% say that SPE is having a positive/very positive effect on them personally
- 83% say that SPE is having a positive/very positive effect on their role as a pastor and their ministry

Similar data came from clerks of church councils:

- 82% of clerks surveyed say that SPE is having a positive/very positive effect on the culture of the CRCNA
- 87% say that SPE is having a positive/very positive personal effect on their pastor
- 86% say that SPE is having a positive/very positive effect on their pastor and his/her ministry

We are hopeful that both SPE and SCE will continue to nurture and foster pastoral and congregational excellence within the CRCNA.

Plans for the Next Year

December 2007 marked the end of our first grant period. It is truly amazing that five years have already come and gone. God has blessed our project in many ways. As we continue our work in the next year, and the next grant period, we will be building on these blessings. We are excited about the opportunities SPE has for pastors, and their spouses—opportunities to foster healthy pastors, congregations, and pastor marriages. We are also excited about the synergy between SPE and SCE and the impact it will have on CRC pastors and congregations.

Specific SPE activities for this year:

- Publish and distribute a significant training tool on pastor marriages.
- Identify the topic for the 2009 significant training tool.
- Publish a number of articles on issues pertaining to pastoral excellence.
- Promote and advertise the project in a variety of ways.
- Hold three regional pastors' spouses' events.
- Host a bi-national pastors' spouses' conference.
- Award two rounds of pastors' spouses' peer grants.
- Establish a network of pastors' spouses to assist pastor families moving into their area.
- Host a learning event for pastors and spouses.
- Produce a final report form the regional pastors' study.
- Continue "church visitor" sessions.
- Host retirement seminars.
- Host three 48 hour peer group events
- Offer "The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry" seminary course twice.
- Award two rounds of pastors' peer learning grants.
- Gather peer learning coordinators' for the annual learning event.
- Revamp the SPE website.
- Host a number of informational dinners for those entering ministry.
- Revise the SPE survey which will be sent all senior pastors and clerks of council in 2009.
- Continue to disseminate SPE's monographs, training tools, and learnings.
- Investigate opportunities to encourage participation in SPE peer groups for nonparticipating pastors.
- Work closely with the Sustaining Congregational Excellence program to cross-pollinate as much as possible.
- Continue to work towards sustainability of the project.
- Continue to work collaboratively with our partners in the pursuit of pastoral excellence.
- Continue to nurture a culture of pastoral excellence in the CRCNA so that it will become apart of its DNA.

Project Leadership

- Jerry Dykstra is the Executive Director 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 is responsible for implementation of the project.

- The Project Administrator is Lis Van Harten. She makes program decisions and administers the project on a daily basis.
- The project Implementation Team has eight members and meets nine times a year:
 - Michael Bruinooge, Director of Ministries Planning, CRCNA
 - Duane Kelderman, Vice President for Administration, Calvin Theological Seminary
 - David Koll, Pastor, Anaheim, California
 - Al Mulder, Regional Church Planting Specialist, CRCNA
 - Kathy Smith, Director of Continuing Education, Calvin Theological Seminary
 - Duane Visser, Director of Pastor-Church Relations, CRCNA
 - Lis Van Harten, SPE Project Administrator
 - Harold Winter, Pastor, St. Catharines, Ontario

This team has a guiding role with regard to the project. They also make decisions regarding proposals under our internal grants program. Ms. Van Harten facilitates the team's meetings.

- The Advisory Board meets annually. Its fifth, and final, meeting was held in November 2007. (The advisory board will not be a part of our second grant period.) 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:
 - Manny Bersach, Pastor, Miami, Florida
 - George Hunsberger, Director of SPE Project, Western Theological Seminary
 - Moon Bae Kim, Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 - Jake Kuipers, Pastor, Trenton, Ontario
 - Thea Leunk, Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 - Lynn Likkel, Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 - Esteban Lugo, Director of Race Relations, CRCNA
 - Tom Niehof, Pastor, Ames, Iowa
 - Reggie Smith, Pastor, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 - John D. Witvliet, Director, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
 - Carl Zylstra, President, Dordt College

Appendix I

	2007 - New	Total to Date
A. Peer Learning Groups		
Number of groups begun by our project	15	107
Number of pastoral participants in all groups	61	538
Number of lay participants in all groups	18	82
Number of congregations represented in all groups	71	497

	2007- New	Totals to Date
B. Other Learning/Training Events *		
Number of events conducted by our project	43	157
Number of pastoral participants in all events	440 **	2,063 **
Number of lay participants in all events	1,077	2,818
Number of congregations represented in all events	661	2,416

* The numbers here represent the continuing education events that are hosted through grants awarded by the SPE project as well as events that our project itself has hosted. Note that some pastors/lay participants have attended more than one event. This results in both the participant and the congregation being counted each time an event is attended.

** Individuals participating by computer distance learning not included.

Appendix II

Date	Event Description	Location
Monday June 2 – Friday June 6, 2008	<u><i>The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry</i></u> - The SPE/CTS course	Calvin Theological Seminary 3233 Burton Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546
Tuesday September 30 – Thursday October 2, 2008	<u><i>For the Many Hats You Wear</i></u> – Conference for Pastors’ Spouses	Prince Conference Center Calvin College 3201 Burton Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546
Wednesday November 12, 2008	<u>Peer Learning Group Coordinators’ Meeting</u> - Coordinators from the November 2007 and May 2008 grants will gather for a day of learning and sharing	Prince Conference Center Calvin College 3201 Burton Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Appendix III

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLISHED GRANT PRODUCTS

Feb 1, 2007 – Dec 31, 2007

- February - article in the *Christian Courier* – “Small Churches Have Big Appeal” – Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen
- March - article in *Ministry Report to Classes and Councils* - "Reason to Rejoice" - Lis Van Harten
- April - article in the *Christian Courier* - “Smaller Churches Measure Up Big” - Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen
- May - article in *Ministry Report to Classes and Councils* - "Dedicated Pastors" - Lis Van Harten
- June - article in the *Christian Courier* – “Pastors Are Like Elvis Impersonators” – Bob Zomermaand
- July - article in the *CRC News* electronic newsletter – “CRC Receives New Grant for SPE Project”
- August - article in the *Christian Courier* – “Hey Coach!” – Bob Zomermaand
- November - article in the *Christian Courier* – “Wednesdays with Chris: Reflections on a Peer Learning Grant” – Marc Nelesen
- December - article in the *Christian Courier* – “Emotional Intelligence in Ministry: The Crux of the Matter” – Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen