

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

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From the Director of Denominational Ministries

In times of economic challenges and uncertainty we often find ourselves wondering how to sustain and even grow our CRC ministries. We look for ways to meet present goals while retaining the capacity to meet future vision and mission goals knowing that we can trust God to provide for that future. We look for methodologies and define principles that create long term growth, strength, or *movements* in ministry for the CRC and for the Kingdom.

In the following reports, we hope you see how CRC ministries continue to work alongside you to create effective, strong, and sustainable ministry. Our ministries empower individuals to lead and enable others to contribute to their communities in meaningful ways and to network with each other, the local church, and ministry partners around the world. We provide venues for church

leaders to interact and share strategies with each other to create sustained growth for ministry. We value local ownership, indigenous ministry teams, and partnerships with local, regional, and global leaders. We desire to train and educate leaders who train and educate others to multiply Kingdom impact.

We are thankful that, in spite of economic realities, God gives us the opportunity to continue to “transform lives and communities worldwide” through our relationships and partnerships.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministries

It is difficult to give a meaningful report after only two full days as director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministries (CCM), but I can easily report that my predecessors—both Herm Keizer and Mark Stephenson—left a good track record and a rather high standard of service to the chaplains within our denomination and the denomination as a whole. Virginia Mauchmar, with years of experience serving three chaplaincy directors, has provided invaluable direction and information to help the transition.

I come to this position after 21 years of experience as a parish pastor and eleven years founding and growing a workplace chaplaincy ministry (Workplace Chaplains U.S.) that currently serves 30 businesses in three states with 23 chaplains.

I have only begun to become familiar with this new position, but I have learned that there are approximately 120 active chaplains serving within the CRC throughout Canada, the U.S., and the military. I have also learned that there are 26 students hoping to become chaplains (several of which are currently in the endorsement process). There are also over 200 retired chaplains or individuals who have inquired about chaplaincy and are therefore on a CCM mailing list.

One goal I have for this ministry is to see a thirty percent growth in the number of active chaplains. I believe that there is a real opportunity to promote chaplaincy and to encourage chaplains to tell their often dramatic stories and to share their gifts with local churches and classes in order to expand crisis management and healthy problem solving.

Disability Concerns

Disability Concerns (DC) helps congregations 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. When staff capacity for DC was reduced by half during the 1990's, then director Rev. James Vanderlaan made more with less by enlisting greater numbers of volunteers. He and several dedicated volunteers set up a network of disability advocates—Regional Advocates who serve CRC classes, and Church Advocates who serve their own churches. The advocates assist church leadership by identifying people with disabilities in their congregations and helping leadership learn how best to include them in the life and ministry of the congregation. Monthly email newsletters and quarterly print newsletters support these volunteers in their work. Also, in most years, the Regional Advocates gather with the DC Advisory Committee for mutual planning, encouragement, and training.

Besides the network of advocates, DC extends its work in a variety of other ways.

- Quarterly newsletter—*Breaking Barriers*
- Website—www.crcna.org/disability—to which we continually add new resource
- Searchable online database of articles by and about people with disabilities
- Conversation about disability and inclusion on the new CRC Network

Note: As of April 1, 2010, Rev. Mark Stephenson, resumed his work full-time for Disability Concerns after working half-time for DC and half-time for Chaplaincy and Care Ministries for over a year. The Chaplaincy report above is the first from its new director, Rev. Ron Klimp.

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Faith Alive Christian Resources is different from other CRC agencies in that part of our mission is to be as self-sustaining as possible through sales of our products. The majority of the ministry share dollars received by Faith Alive goes to the publication and distribution of *the Banner* to every CRC household and to the world-wide publication ministry of World Literature Ministries. A small amount also goes to fund teacher training.

So, the most important way Faith Alive experiences the support of the CRC is when churches and individuals purchase its products. Conversely, Faith Alive's mission to publish excellent, relevant, solidly Reformed books, ebooks, Bible studies, leadership resources, and curricula works to support, sustain, and grow the vital ministries of Christian Reformed churches through education, leadership development, spiritual growth, discipleship, faith formation, and more.

It is a vital, interdependent relationship. Faith Alive is sustained as its products meet the needs of churches, schools, seminaries, colleges, students and individuals who purchase its content. Our customers are sustained as Faith Alive content stimulates conversations, initiates

growth, and transforms lives worldwide. God is glorified through it all.

Faith Alive takes this interdependency very seriously, knowing it must earn the right to be the content provider for its customers. Our “measuring stick” is our sales and how vibrant and healthy are the customers we serve. Keep the conversation going. Tell us how we are doing. Write to editor@faithaliveresources.org.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

When we talk about social justice we mean God's original intention for human society—a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and peace (shalom) reigns. God calls the church to participate in the renewal of society so that all—especially the weak and vulnerable—can enjoy God's good gifts.

To do this, the church rightly emphasizes the administration of mercy. But this also involves identifying the root causes that keep people poor, hungry, and powerless. The vast web of structural factors that perpetuate these social injustices cannot be sustainably overcome without broad systemic reform, and so we witness and work to remove these barriers.

To quote the old adage, “Give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime.” But what if the man doesn't have access to the pond? What if the pond is polluted? Reforming some of the systems that keep the man from feeding himself and his family creates a sustainable future where all are able to rise out of poverty.

As we work to establish his kingdom here on earth, we follow God's command to seek justice and rescue the oppressed. Currently, our main initiatives include creation care, immigration reform, holding governments accountable to the Millennium Development Goals, and peacemaking in the Middle East.

You too can raise your voice on behalf of the voiceless! Visit our action center at www.crcjustice.org to learn more.

Pastor-Church Relations

Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs) function under the auspices of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations. STMs are key in assisting congregations through times of challenging transition and are especially suited for helping to develop and sustain robust congregational life. STMs are seasoned pastors who are both gifted and trained to guide a church community through the challenges and opportunities unique to the season between one pastor's leaving and another's being called. Currently, there are ten CRC pastors working in the US and Canada as STMs.

The way the Specialized Transitional Ministry is organized and STMs are deployed is also adapting to ensure a growing cadre of these ministry professionals. Formerly, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations employed up to six STMs and contracted with

congregations for their services. That model is being phased out and is being replaced by a model in which Pastor-Church Relations endorses specific STMs and assists them with placement, salary guidelines, and occasional salary assistance. Additionally, churches that are struggling financially and contracting with endorsed STMs are eligible to apply for modest financial grants to assist them through this challenging time.

The growing vision for the work of Specialized Transitional Ministers is creating a hopeful path forward not only for churches experiencing a season of struggle but also for Pastor-Church Relation's capacity to offer needed and effective support.

Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry acknowledges the commitment and hard work of Classical Safe Church Teams. The team is a valuable resource to the churches in a classis. Team members are knowledgeable about local events and resources and can be mobilized quickly to assist church leaders when a crisis arises. The resources of Safe Church Ministry are enhanced by twenty teams across the US and Canada that make more personnel available.

The Safe Church Team is trained to convene an advisory panel upon request of the church or a victim. Advisory panels conduct fact-finding around allegations of physical or sexual abuse placed against a church leader. The Safe Church Team also offers an advocate to assist the victim throughout the advisory panel process. Currently, about one-half of the teams have an advocate available.

The Safe Church Team also offers educational events for local churches or a classis-wide event for several communities. The teams in British Columbia frequently offer a classis-wide conference for church leaders and church members. Under the leadership of the Classis Huron Safe Church Team, teams from Southern Ontario work together each year to provide an intra-classes conference that offers a variety of abuse-related topics for church leaders. Safe Church Team members also present at Days of Encouragement and at classis meetings.

Safe Church Ministry and the Classical Safe Church Teams, through consultation and networking with each other, are equipped to assist churches to provide an effective and just response when matters of abuse arise.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

As the program name implies, sustaining healthy ministry is key to the work Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) engages in. This is accomplished in a number of ways. Health & Renewal grants are opportunities for smaller churches to creatively design a project (a new ministry or program) that fosters health in their congregation. The grants are seed money. It is hoped churches will be able to sustain the ministry once the grant period is completed. One participating church

reported, "The Worship Committee is committed to moving forward with the project even though we are no longer funded by the grant for the coming year. We feel it is important to continue the progress and momentum from the past year."

To date almost thirty churches are working with an SCE coach. Having the coach walk alongside the pastor and one ministry leader not only sustains these congregational leaders but positively impacts the rest of the folks in leadership. A common topic for the year long coaching relationship is "who are we and where are we going". Churches are eager to review these most basic questions in order to have a firm foundation on which to head into the future.

"The CRC is an exciting and supportive place to be in ministry." This quote comes from an attendee of a recent SCE Learning Event. These events are an opportunity to encourage, support, refresh, and renew pastors and ministry leaders. Two hundred congregations have attended eighteen events in the first three years of programming.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

In 2002 Lilly Endowment Inc. created an opportunity for Christian organizations to focus on their pastors. The CRCNA received one of the 63 project grants Lilly awarded under the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) initiative. To date, almost seventy percent of CRC pastors have participated in the 128 peer learning (PL) groups formed. The groups allow pastors to gather together to: express ministry joys and challenges, pray, support and encourage each other, attend a continuing education event, and share learning and best practices. What is the impact of these experiences? Read what pastors are saying:

"The SPE program has done for me exactly what the name states and I couldn't be more grateful. It has improved my ministry, sustained my soul, and connected me with others in healthy and helpful relationships."

"It is the ability to network with peers that continues to fuel, sustain, and inspire me to work even harder in ministry."

"For me and my close friends, SPE has not only been a life-line, but a major energy booster for what we do."

SPE is demonstrating its deep care for pastors in a number of ways—one of which is PL groups. It is sustaining CRC pastors. As our ministry leaders are sustained, they are better able to continue in the work they have been called to.

CRWRC

CRWRC's goal as the "hands and feet" of Jesus Christ with people in poverty is to "work ourselves out of a job." By partnering with local organizations, CRWRC increases ministry capacity through diaconal training, leadership

development, financial management, and ongoing consultation.

Disaster Response Services (DRS): DRS opens two sites this Spring! Beginning March 27, DRS will rebuild after a tornado in Cedar Rapids, IA. Starting May 1, DRS will repair flood-damaged homes in Munster, IN. CRWRC's Haiti earthquake response is providing emergency relief and multi-year rehabilitation. CRWRC is also responding through partners in Chile, providing earthquake relief near Concepcion.

Community Development: CRWRC is monitoring security in Jos, Nigeria, where violence resulted in property loss. In 2009, CRWRC requested an agricultural evaluation and placed in the top quartile of all non-government organizations increasing food security in developing countries. We are thankful!

Embrace AIDS: CRWRC announced the winning contestant of a 3-week trip to Uganda. The winner will work alongside CRWRC staff and raise awareness through *Embrace AIDS*.

Financial Challenge: CRWRC made significant budget reductions this year and will maintain a flat budget next year. Despite efforts to avoid program cuts, CRWRC will end work in Ecuador in June.

New Resources

- The *2009 CRWRC Annual Ministry Report* is available and was mailed to CRCs in January.
- *Embrace AIDS Sunday* is May 30. CRCs received notice in March that materials are ready to order.
- The spring issue of *Through the Dust*, a magazine for deacons and champions, will arrive in May.

Calvin College

Christian education has faced challenges for decades and often has involved sacrifice. Calvin works diligently to balance the needs of students and parents and control the costs of programs, campus services, and tuition. We work diligently to assure that budgets are lean, programs are strong, and that new buildings are funded by donations – not tuition. Nevertheless, tuition for a Christian college is perceived by some families as out of reach.

What is the value of a Christian college education? Public universities and community colleges can be less expensive. How, then, do Christian families make these decisions?

Families are urged to make their college selection decision after careful, prayerful consideration and thorough research. We recommend that families visit the campus, speak with faculty and students, attend chapel and classes, and see firsthand how Calvin prepares students for life.

Then check out our website (www.calvin.edu) and seek the advice of alumni, parents, pastors and

counselors. Research the depth and array of majors, worship, service opportunities, and off-campus programs.

In particular, prospective students should look beyond the “sticker price”—apply, submit the financial information forms, and consider the *net cost* after all scholarships and grants have been awarded.

Calvin remains committed to and proud of its relationship with the Christian Reformed Church. Our families especially appreciate the ministry shares which are used entirely to provide tuition grants for CRC students. We thank you for your continued commitment and covet your prayers in these challenging times!

Calvin Theological Seminary

“Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church in North America and wider constituencies by preparing persons for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel.” That mission statement gives CTS its clear focus. The CRC is our core audience, though our reach goes far beyond the CRC with students from 25 denominations and 19 countries. Preparing ministry leaders and giving leadership in Reformed thought is our reason for existence.

In a time when many CRC members and congregations struggle with the question of identity (What does it mean to be Christian Reformed?) the seminary has a tremendous responsibility and privilege to sustain and deepen the deep biblical and theological roots of our identity and to prepare effective ministry leaders who minister out of that biblical and Reformed identity.

As one observes the broader denominational landscape in North America, two things are clear. First, virtually every denomination is going through an “identity crisis,” asking deep questions about who they are and what their particular mission for the future is. Second, the CRC still has what many denominations tell us they have long lost and would love to recover—a theological identity that tethers, nurtures, and guides it. *Our World Belongs to God* is just one concrete example of the CRC's theological identity in action. CTS is humbled to have a key role, primarily through its alumni in ministry, in sustaining the biblical and theological vision of our life together.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The three Canadian Urban Aboriginal Ministries seek to promote health and healing within their communities in a manner that upholds the name of Jesus Christ while respecting and celebrating the Aboriginal understanding of life and worship.

As Reformed Christians, we find ways to connect with the Aboriginal heritage and allow the transforming presence of God's spirit to bring about change within individuals, families, and the communities in which we work.

One critical aspect to the success and longevity of our work is ensuring that the residents of our neighborhoods are involved and engaged in the ministry of our respective centers. As we empower individuals to lead, God's spirit works in and through them, and enables others to contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. As ministry moves beyond a *staff* and *client* approach, our ministries become less dependent on one or two single persons, and are able to sustain themselves through vital involvement of volunteers.

For example, at the Indian Family Center in Winnipeg we presently have volunteers who are running our kitchen, teaching people how to bake bannock (a type of traditional bread), beading, leading an exercise program, cleaning our ministry center, and assisting with our worship circle. Two of our volunteers are involved in the local denominational Leadership Development Network. We believe the development of leaders such as these will enable our ministry to grow long after the present leaders move on.

We celebrate what God is doing in all of us as we serve him and see him work.

Back to God Ministries International

When Rev. Isaac Jen began broadcasting into mainland China in 1974 for Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), there was no response. Three years later the wall of silence cracked following Mao Tse-Tung's death. Letters from Chinese listeners increased and Christian literature was cautiously delivered to new believers. Thirty-six years later the Chinese ministry is reaching millions of Chinese people through radio, print media, and six powerful websites that bridge communication barriers. By building relationships with listeners and local church leaders, BTGMI was able in 2009 to duplicate and distribute discipleship materials *inside* mainland China for the first time in its media history!

In order to make a lasting and sustainable impact in the world, BTGMI values indigenous ministry teams and partnerships with local leaders. A key strategy is to provide leadership training through indigenous ministry leaders. BTGMI works with Timothy Leadership Training Institute in Indonesia. Pastoral training is also provided for church leaders, volunteers, and communicators in the Middle East, French-speaking Africa, India, Russia, and several countries in Latin America. Training leaders to train others multiplies ongoing discipleship throughout the world.

BTGMI also empowers churches in North America to use and increase effectiveness of congregational media ministry through www.ChurchJuice.com. Providing a venue for church leaders to interact with staff and share strategies with each other encourages long-term potential for sustained growth using media ministry.

For seventy years BTGMI has pursued cutting edge technology, building relationships for immediate as well as sustained ministry. By God's grace and through the faithful support of the CRCNA and other partners, we will

continue to evangelize and disciple people worldwide through media.

Home Missions

Christian Reformed Home Missions works to create effective, sustainable ministry for the CRC and God's kingdom. John 15:16 says, "I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last." Following are three primary ways we work for ministry that bears lasting and sustainable fruit.

Local partnerships: Home Missions believes that the best way to create and sustain ministry is to invite local partners to take the lead as we mutually work together in God's mission in North America. Through our seven regionally-based ministry teams and four ethnic leaders, Home Missions works to build local ownership for new mission initiatives such as church plants and campus ministries.

Coaching systems. Home Missions is also committed to ensuring that church leaders who initiate change or transformation have a coach who walks through that process with them. Through our regionally-based partnerships, we work to provide that coaching and mentoring so that ministry leaders are better able to sustain and grow their ministries.

Clusters of ministry leaders. One of the key ways in which Home Missions helps sustain ministry is through geographically-based ministry clusters. In clusters, ministry leaders are gathering together for support, learning, and accountability as they discover their mutual place in the mission of God.

Through initiatives like these, Home Missions and its partners work to build ministry that bears fruit—fruit that will last.

World Missions

Some of the key components we focus on to help our partners retain sustainability are planting and developing new churches, promoting church health, developing leaders, working in Christian education, and increasing impact through relationships and partnerships which multiply ministry. Following are some highlights from our last quarter which show results in some of these areas.

- 50 new worshipping communities
- 1390 participants in formal pastoral and theological training
- 2700 participants in non-formal leadership training programs
- 40 programs discipling children and youth
- 70 programs discipling adults
- 56 CRCNA members teaching in Christian schools international through CRWM
- 28 new initiatives with partners

In order to help CRWM in its sustainability, we focus on finding and working alongside strong international

partners, fostering prayer for the work of the Gospel around the world, serving CRC congregations to help them follow sound mission practices in their global mission efforts, careful planning and budgeting, giving churches and individuals in the CRCNA opportunities to invest themselves and their resources in ways that advance the Kingdom of God around the world; and working at collaborating and transcending barriers for maximum kingdom impact. Building these relationships with churches and individuals is done through missionary prayer letters and presentation, staff visits, direct mailings and the Missions Education and Engagement Team that helps churches discern what their congregation's role is in the Great Commission.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps: When all else is stripped away, an organization is marked by its mission statement. The Cadet statement includes “to help boys to grow spiritually in all areas of life” based on Luke 2:52, which states that Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man. Since we want our boys to become Christlike, our program and materials shape a ministry that grows boys spiritually as well as mentally, physically, and socially. We nurture boys in small groups, study the Bible together, teach skills in crafts and projects, and experience God in nature. We have found that a key to sustainability in helping boys grow spiritually is to minister to their leaders—the counselors. We value recruiting, training, building, and retaining Christian men who realize that God has called them to their task.

Youth Unlimited: Youth Unlimited acknowledges the tough economic climate of today and therefore evaluates everything we do against our mission to help churches challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ so they can transform their world for him. We are committed to continue offering life changing events for the church and its youth through SERVE, Live it, and the Where U At urban youth conference. YU is also committed to support and care for the local youth worker through networking, resourcing, and training events such as the Youth Worker Retreats.

GEMS Girls' Clubs: Helping girls develop a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ and training and equipping women to be vibrant role models and mentors of girls are the dual targets of all of our efforts. This translates into creating and providing outstanding curriculum and resources for girls and delivering excellent, inspiring training to women serving as counselors in the ministry. In times of increasing or declining resources, both things remain central to our Kingdom calling.