

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

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CHRISTIAN
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Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Ninety-five full-time and 19 part-time Christian Reformed chaplains bring the love of our Lord to people. Twenty-three men and women are studying to be chaplains and Chaplaincy and Care Ministry has received inquiries from another 25 people who are considering chaplaincy as a calling.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (formerly Chaplaincy Ministries) will soon have a new director with a new job description. The new name for our ministry was chosen for several reasons:

- Many people don't know what a chaplain does. Chaplains bring the caring presence of Christ to people in the military, hospitals, hospice, mental health hospitals, and hurting people in business and industry. The new name makes explicit the connection between chaplains and care.
- On the whole, chaplains receive more extensive training in care ministry than other ordained people. Our office will work to connect chaplains with pastors, elders, and others in churches so that they can benefit from the chaplains' training and experience. One chaplain wrote, "We could become front line resource persons for churches wanting and needing help in promoting care in their communities."
- The new name makes a clearer connection between our ministry and the other specialized ministries of our denomination, which together are responsible for assisting congregations in enhancing community and fostering care.

Until a new director is hired, Rev. Mark Stephenson will serve as the Interim Director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry as well as the Director of Disability Concerns. Chaplain Herm Keizer performs endorsements for all of our chaplains.

Committee for Contact with the Government

In more than 40 years of ministry the CRC's Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) has experienced small signs of hope and more than a few challenges to justice. In 2009, we continued pursuing Christ's ministry of reconciliation with patience and persistence.

The CCG held its May meeting in Ottawa, Ontario. The eight-member committee, with the support of Mike

Wow, another year of serving Christ together! I challenge you to take a few minutes to read these reports, to pause and hear about God's work in and through the Christian Reformed Church. Please know that our ministries are truly "ours". We know that none of us can do this work alone, we do it together!

As one Filipino brother wrote in describing the heart of his fellow servant, "When you run alone, you run fast; when you run together, you run far." We have "run far" together. I hope and pray these articles bring joy to your journey and an opportunity to praise God for "transforming lives and communities worldwide"!

Hogeterp, Research and Communications Manager, took the opportunity to visit with partners and members of Parliament to discuss CCG's work on Aboriginal Justice and Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

The call to justice and reconciliation with Aboriginal people is for all churches and people in Canada because we are all "Treaty People." Aboriginal Justice and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools are a growing element of CCG's education and advocacy work. We are learning a great deal from partners at KAIROS Indigenous Rights Program, the Evangelical Fellowship's Aboriginal Ministries Council, the Ecumenical Working Group on Indian Residential Schools, and the Assembly of First Nations.

CCG's ongoing research and interaction with policy makers and shapers is informing a broader ecumenical effort for public dialogue on peace building and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Mobile Justice, CCG's monthly digital news bulletin (available at www.crcna.org/ccg) provides insightful commentary on Aboriginal Justice and Peace in Afghanistan and profiles the good work of our partners in justice and reconciliation.

Disability Concerns

In March 2009, the Director of Disability Concerns, Rev. Mark Stephenson, also assumed the work of Interim Director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. He will divide his time evenly between the two ministries until a new Director of Chaplaincy and Care is in place.

The ministry of Disability Concerns has continued to serve Christian Reformed churches:

- About 550 Regional, Church, and Agency Advocates assist classes, churches, and ministries across North America in their inclusion of people with disabilities.
- This spring we introduced an electronic subscription to our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, and made it easier to reference articles from previous issues on our web site.
- The traffic on our web site has more than doubled in two years, which suggests that many are finding useful resources there.
- We produced a handbook for Disability Advocates (available in print and on our web site) that we distribute to all of our disability advocates. A number of churches have found them so useful that they ordered multiple copies and distributed them to church leadership.
- Mwaya Kitavi, East Africa Director for World Missions, received assistance from Disability Concerns in his work with a ministry with the deaf in Kenya.
- This fall we formed a mental health task force comprising people from the U.S. and Canada to begin work in assisting congregations with ministry to people with mental health issues.

The work of our denomination to include people with disabilities in church life has caused others to take notice. This summer we received a letter which said in part, "I

heard a wonderful comment about the CRC's involvement with individuals with developmental disabilities. ...The CRC is a model of how all church communities should be reaching out to individuals with disabilities."

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Publishing

Serving the CRC and the wider Reformed community, Faith Alive was blessed in 2009 to expand its line of publications in every area:

- Over 30 new products and titles
- Two new hymnals, including the popular Songs for Contemporary Worship
- Four issues of Reformed Worship
- A new video-based adult course on Revelation, "God Wins"
- Continuing development of the Kid Connection curriculum for smaller churches

Faith Alive is deeply involved in the planning and development of a new all-churches, all-ages faith nurture curriculum to be introduced in 2012.

Customer Service

In 2009, Faith Alive Christian Resources served over 8,500 customers with more than 27,000 orders, representing over 40 different denominations. While 55 percent of the orders have been phoned in, 24 percent have come from the web.

Faith Alive also provides order fulfillment for all CRCNA agencies and departments, in addition to being the resource provider for the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

The Banner

The Banner continues to generate high levels of satisfaction among readers. The 2009 readership survey indicated 80 percent of readers are either very or somewhat satisfied with *The Banner*, and at least 20 percent read it cover to cover.

This past year, *The Banner* celebrated the 500th birthday of Protestant reformer John Calvin. Calvin College chaplain emeritus, Dale Cooper, has contributed a series of monthly reflections on Calvin's *Institutes* in the "Reformed Matters" column. These are available in the online version of *The Banner* at www.thebanner.org.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Where to begin! This year, the Office of Social Justice (OSJ) has managed to be more active than ever aided by a succession of small grants as well as a new advocacy intern.

With the help of the Kuyers Institute, the OSJ commissioned a small team to catalogue all the justice-related resources in the denomination for use in Christian school curriculums. Their findings have been compiled into elementary, middle, and high school lists sorted by

subject and available online at
<http://crcteacherslounge.ning.com>.

All that research inspired us to do a little information disseminating of our own. This summer we partnered with the founders of **culture is not optional* for a speaking tour across CRC churches on the subject of simple living and local eating. Rob and Kirsten, our tour hosts, blogged throughout their travels on <http://justiceseekers.com>.

Throughout the year, OSJ has put out several new prayer resources. In addition to special devotion series for Advent and Lent, we started a weekly newsletter with prayer requests for justice issues around the world. Visit our web site at www.crcjustice.org to subscribe to OSJ Prayers.

Our print resources have expanded as well. We've published two issues of the new Justice Seekers magazine, a comprehensive guide to the most exciting issues of the moment. Our first issue showcased the many applicants for our \$500 Green Grant, for congregations doing exciting things to care for creation. Recently we released a fair trade issue that has been widely requested for school and church presentations.

Pastor-Church Relations

It has been an active few months for Pastor-Church Relations (PCR). Some highlights include:

- A Regional Pastor Conference was held at the Prince Conference Center in Grand Rapids where regional pastors, Specialized Transition Ministers, and the Staff Ministry Committee and Youth Ministry Task Force gathered to encourage and deepen understanding of ministry in a changing church environment. The focus was on "staff ministry" and the way it alters the shape of ministry for congregations and pastors. Mark DeVries of Youth Ministry Architects provided an engaging and challenging presentation that had the group firing on all cylinders.
- Staff of PCR, in partnership with a Sustaining Pastoral Excellence peer group, has been developing a manual for the "Effective Evaluation of Pastors and Church Staff". This manual should be available to churches early this year.
- A significant transition is underway in the "Specialized Transition Ministry" (STM) initiative. A new approach for STMs (formerly "trained interims") is being developed. Under the leadership of a four person steering committee, the STMs are developing a certification process, guidelines for funding support, standard practices and ways of promoting the ministry within the denomination. The need for this ministry as a function of Pastor-Church Relations continues to grow.
- PCR provides direct service to pastors, church ministry staff and congregations. It also serves them through extension ministries such as regional pastors, a mentoring program for new pastors, church visitor training, staff ministry support, and the Specialized Transition Ministry initiative.

Safe Church Ministry

Below is a reflection on Safe Church Ministry activities of the past year:

- About 100 reports of abuse were disclosed this year. Some reports were based on events that happened 'the day before,' some happened months or years ago.
- Twenty churches and organizations submitted their child safety policies to Safe Church Ministry for review. The review helps a church/organization understand the gaps or inconsistencies in its policies that can increase the risk of abuse or the risk of liability. In addition, several churches requested information about forming a child safety policy.
- Several trainings were held in places like: Seattle, WA; Parkersburg, IA; Sioux Center, IA; Oak Forest, IL; Anaheim, CA; and Ripon, CA.
- The director offered five trainings this year to Safe Church Teams. A total of 15 classes sent representatives to one of these five trainings. Two new teams were formed in Classis Eastern Canada and Classis Wisconsin.
- To raise awareness of the various forms of abuse, Safe Church Ministry sponsored Abuse Awareness in September. This year 27,000 inserts were distributed to churches to create awareness of elderly abuse and the path toward healing.
- Safe Church Ministry enhanced the work of Safe Church Team advocates and chairpersons by sponsoring an internet group site for each group to exchange information. The office sponsored a training event for each group. The office also provided opportunities for chairpersons to network and stay informed about local and denominational activities.

Race Relations

Realizing the greater impact of ministry through partnerships, the Office of Race Relations (ORR) continues to develop effective ministry partnerships with several of the denominational agencies, including more collaboration with the directors of the Specialized Ministries.

- In spring, 2009, Race Relations staff traveled to Nicaragua to conduct a contextualized Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) workshop involving 50 World Missions and CRWRC missionaries and their families.
- In April, we met with CRC pastors to promote the work of antiracism and racial reconciliation in Washington State and British Columbia. Plans are underway to conduct DORR and Widening the Circle (WTC) workshops in those areas.
- At the Multiethnic Conference (MEC), we partnered with Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) to present a new resource, Spotlight, to MEC participants. In addition, the Form of Subscription (FOS) committee solicited feedback from MEC

conferees on the FOS. About 105 MEC participants enjoyed the Saturday workshops, the keynote speaker, and the Sunday worship.

- Race Relations continues its involvement with the Arab-American Friendship Center in Dearborn, Mich. We have visited the center twice with various CRC leaders. Our hosts, Bassem and Wafa Qusous provided a tour not only of the center but also of the key sites of Arab activity. In June, Dr. and Mrs. Qusous presented both a plenary session and a workshop at the MEC on how to effectively minister among Arabs and Muslims.
- Throughout this year, 80 CRCNA staff has taken the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) workshop. In addition, there have been DORR workshops and facilitator training workshops in New Jersey, including DORR for campus ministers.

We continue to rejoice in the progress of our work as we see the movement of God and his great power. To God be the glory forever and ever.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) recently completed its second year of programming—two exciting years of discovery, adjustment, learning—and healthier congregations. SCE's purpose is to create and sustain healthy congregations that God can use in transforming lives and communities. The focus is on smaller congregations (150 adult professing members or less). Currently, 56% (589) of all CRCs fall into this category. Here is a quick overview of what has been happening in the first two years.

- 58% of eligible Canadian churches & 51% of eligible US churches have participated in SCE programming.
- 89 *Health & Renewal* projects were funded in 81 congregations (68 in the US and 13 in Canada). Projects foster health in congregations and often involve outreach.
- 266 *Technology & Equipment* grants were awarded to 224 congregations (40 in Canada & 184 in the US). Equipment purchased includes laptops, projectors, microphones, etc.
- Four *Coaching for Churches* grants were awarded (all US churches). An SCE coach walks alongside a pastor and ministry leader as they explore an aspect of church health.
- 15 *Learning Events* were held (11 in the US; four in Canada) with 148 congregations participating. Learning events are opportunities for pastors, ministry leaders, and their spouses to share and learn about healthy congregations.

What are the participants saying? "We can say that [our HR project] has been one of the best things that have ever happened to our little church," and, "I believe the SCE grant was simply instrumental in changing the momentum of this congregation and people wanted to be a part of it."

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

December 2009 marked the end of the seventh year of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) project. Current programming provides grants for Pastors (PL) and Pastors' Spouses' (PS) peer groups. In addition to the grants, regional Pastor Couple (pastor and his/her spouse) Learning Events are held.

At the time of writing, 67 percent of CRC pastors and ministry associates had been in an SPE-PL group. These pastors represent 53 percent of all CRC churches. 153 PL grants have been awarded to 118 groups. The exciting thing is that even after seven years, interest is very strong. Sixty-four percent of pastors named in the proposals received for the late 2009 deadline were new to SPE-PL groups.

What do pastors think about PL groups? One pastor said, "I have been convinced that meeting together in this format will be an essential component in sustaining my ministry."

Thirty-five couples attended the two Pastor Couple Learning Events held in 2009. These opportunities for encouragement, refreshment, and continuing education are positively impacting the participants as one noted, "I felt very appreciated by the CRC/SPE. Thanks for the gift."

Eleven percent of pastors'/ministry associates' spouses have been in one of the 12 groups that have received a grant. The groups are filling a need. "We have concerns and frustrations that are unique to ministry spouses and families. We have very few opportunities to be open and real."

With only two years of Lilly Endowment Inc. funding remaining, sustainability plans for SPE programming are in the works.

CRWRC

As we look back over what God has done through CRWRC during the past quarter, we thank Him for blessing our programs and our partners.

Disaster Response: In North America, CRWRC-DRS has reopened sites in communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Ike and completed reconstruction of flood-damaged homes in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Tanana, Alaska.

Internationally, CRWRC continues response to survivors of September's typhoons in the Philippines and American Samoa, and earthquakes in Indonesia. Immediate aid to survivors—including food, drinking water, temporary shelter, and medical supplies—provides direct help and a reason to hope.

Community Development: This past quarter CRWRC staff continued working in forty-four countries around the world in partnership with 193 churches and community organizations. CRWRC helped leaders within these churches and organizations involve their communities in

identifying needs, developing solutions, and carrying out programs that lead to lasting change.

Embrace AIDS: Because HIV and AIDS are a roadblock to community development, CRWRC's Embrace AIDS programs are active in seventeen HIV and AIDS initiatives in twenty-three countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Nine more will launch in 2010.

In the iEmbraceAIDS campaign, CRWRC has implemented a trip give-away contest to encourage people to take action in the face of the global AIDS pandemic. The winner will be taken on a three-week trip to Uganda that will involve a personal response to the HIV and AIDS crisis.

New Resources:

- 2009-2010 Gift Catalog
- Free Resources for Worship, brochure for churches.
- Donor Relations Updates about Finances and the Global Food Crisis.
- Advent e-devotionals

Calvin College

Fall 2009 enrollment:

- Enrollment: 4,092 students
- New first-year class of 945 students this fall, an increase of 9 from last year
- Ninety percent of students receive some type of financial aid
- 46 percent are members of the CRC
- Calvin's ministry shares fund grants for CRC students
- Calvin students come from 48 states, 5 Canadian Provinces, and 47 countries
- Michigan accounts for 53 percent
- The next top percentages are Illinois (9.1), Indiana (3.2), and Ontario (2.9), with California, Ohio, Wisconsin and Washington close behind
- U.S. minority population: the largest-ever increase in the first-year class with 93 ethnic minority students and 69 international students
- U.S. ethnic minority population now is 293 (7.2 percent), the highest ever
- International student number 383 (9.3 percent). The largest groups, by country: Canada (156), Korea (41), China (19), Hong Kong (16), Ghana (15) and Indonesia (12)
- Fastest growing programs: Asian Studies, Biology, Chemistry/Bio-Chemistry, Economics, Physical Education, and International Relations

Chaplain – Campus Ministries Team

- Rev. Dr. Mary Hulst, campus chaplain
- Aaron Winkle, associate chaplain for upper class students
- Aminah and Nate Bradford, associate chaplains for residence life
- Cindy De Jong, chapel coordinator
- Lisa Jouwsma, mentoring coordinator

- Paul Ryan, coordinator of LOFT and music
- Sharon Bytwerk, spiritual director.

Jubilee Fellows for spiritual leadership and Christian ministry

- 12 juniors selected each fall
- Spring seminar course is followed by a 10-week summer internship
- During the fall of senior year, Fellows use leadership gifts in service to the Calvin community and serve CRC churches in the U.S. in the summer 2009

See www.calvin.edu/faith for more information.

Please remember these students and staff in your prayers as they work in Christian ministry and leadership.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Seminary is grateful to God for many blessings including:

- The seminary's new M.Div. curriculum has begun. The curriculum retains the strengths of a classical theological education with renewed emphases on preaching, spiritual formation, contextualized ministry, and congregational leadership. The seminary received valuable input from pastors and other church members throughout the development of the new curriculum.
- The seminary has experienced challenging economic times leading to reductions in staff, faculty and compensation. God has blessed us with committed staff and faculty who serve tirelessly and gratefully.
- Fall 2009 enrollment in the M.Div. and Th.M. program increased more than 30% over 2008 enrollment, and annual fund gifts increased 25% over the previous year.
- The seminary auditorium and areas around it are being renewed. The DeVos Center for Lifelong Learning reflects Richard and Helen DeVos' strong commitment to the continuing education of pastors and other ministry leaders. This renovation project completes the updating of the original seminary building constructed in 1957 on the CRC's centennial.
- For the first time in its history, the seminary is offering certificate programs. These programs are especially geared to church members and staff who are looking for specialized training, but not planning to complete a degree program. Programs are available in nine areas: church planting, educational ministries, English Bible, Ministry, Missions and Evangelism, Pastoral Care, Theology, Worship and Youth Ministry. Applicants must be high school graduates. For more information visit: www.calvinseminary.edu/degrees/certificates/.

Back to God Ministries International

Using media tools that effectively reach diverse cultures and societies, Back to God Ministries International

(BTGMI) continues to evangelize and disciple every person we can reach, transforming lives and communities by the power of the Word and Spirit. Our 10 unique language ministries use radio, television, Internet, phone, and print media to reach people worldwide. Each year we receive millions of responses from people in more than 200 countries.

- We are now broadcasting in India in the Hindi language. In collaboration with Words of Hope and Good Books Ministries in Northern India, we have the opportunity to reach an estimated 400 million Hindi-speaking people. This also opens doors for producing broadcasts that reach people in neighboring countries.
- In order to increase leadership training for communities of faith being formed in response to our media work in Indonesia, we entered into partnership with the Timothy Leadership Institute. In addition, we also partner with World Missions and CRWRC for advanced evangelistic and diaconal training in Indonesia among the 121 listener communities established since 2007.
- A new partnership with World Missions in Haiti provides leadership training and discipleship through Bible study to listeners there.
- In the Middle East, there is new openness to the gospel. As people seek truth, we've seen a significant increase in visits to our Arabic web site for downloads of the Bible and other discipleship materials.
- Partners in mainland China are opening doors for the duplication and distribution of much-needed discipleship materials inside this vast country.

Home Missions

God was clearly at work in communities across North America in 2009! With the Lord leading us, Home Missions and Christian Reformed churches partnered to support 200 ministries that are renewing communities together and changing lives with the gospel message in the United States and Canada.

In 2009, we witnessed God's hand in a variety of exciting new ministry work. Here are some highlights:

- A growing number of church leaders gathered in ministry clusters for learning and encouragement. One example is the Seattle cluster, in which leaders of eight new and established CRCs meet together regularly to pray, discuss resources, and seek new ways to collaborate in renewing their churches and communities.
- Thirty new churches were formed through Home Missions partnerships. These ministries include MosaicHouse, a growing church that is bringing the gospel to an ethnically diverse community in Edmonton, Alberta. Another new ministry, inSpirit Church, near Grand Rapids, Michigan, attracted 150 people to the first worship service in its unique office/warehouse space.
- Campus ministries supported by Home Missions continued to engage students with Christ's love on 22 secular university campuses in Canada and the U.S.

Seventeen students on 15 campuses are part of the Emerging Leader program.

- Twenty-six people attended the first retreat in the Home Missions Great Lakes Regional Team-sponsored "Deeper Journey" series. Described as a "journey into a greater relationship with God," Deeper Journey gives church and ministry leaders, as well as their spouses, a break from their normal routines and a chance to build a closer relationship with God and one another.
- As part of its commitment to cultivate diverse new leaders, Home Missions again sponsored an Assessment Center—a three-day event designed to help identify and recruit CRC leaders. Twenty people have been assessed over the past two years.

World Missions

World Missions has more than 200 missionaries serving in over 20 countries. Through partnerships, our work extends to more than 30 countries.

Although our primary focus is on evangelism and church planting; missionaries also focus on other areas such as leadership training and development, Christian education, and regional networking centers.

Below is a brief glance at some of what the Lord has accomplished through World Missions' missionaries and partners in the past year:

- The Spirit has moved more than 9,000 people to become Christians, including some in the most resistant people groups on the face of the earth.
- Nearly 50 new worshipping communities were established.
- Fifteen new missionaries joined our staff.
- Thirteen Christian Reformed young adults spent the summer serving in countries around the world.
- Eighty-five teachers and administrators served in international schools.
- WM partnered with a seminary in Uganda to develop a department for holistic transformation.
- World Missions' Special Projects began work with partners in Africa and Latin America to create a learning program for Christian educators.
- In cooperation with Home Missions, BTGMI, and CRWRC, we continue to work to develop strategies to reach Muslims in North America and around the world.
- A Missions Education and Engagement department encourages local congregations to become more actively involved in global ministry.
- WM launched a youth initiative project, Hope Equals, to encourage Christian college-aged youth to become actively involved in a peaceful, just, and mutually respectful resolution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

We are thrilled at what the Lord has accomplished through World Missions in the last year, and are looking forward to what He will bring about in years to come.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

GEMS Girls' Club: In 2009 over 23,000 girls met in GEMS Clubs across the US and Canada. Thousands of additional girls met in clubs in Zambia, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and Spain. In every club the primary emphasis has been on building relationships—relationships between girls, between girls and counselors, and between girls and their Savior.

Through this year's theme "Prayer: No Worries," girls and counselors have learned and experienced what it means to live a life of prayer, trusting God with and for all things. Exchanging worry and control for the peace that passes all understanding has been a rich find for many. This theme, based on Philippians 4:6-7, has indeed changed lives.

Calvinist Cadet Corps: The Cadet ministry is spreading. In 2006, we introduced the Cadet vision to the Reformed Church of East Africa in Kenya, and that denomination says that it sees Cadets as God's answer to its need for ministry to children. The RCEA now boasts 30 Cadet clubs and has a coordinator in place to oversee the activities and growth of the program. Please pray with us that God will bless this outreach to Africa.

The theme for Cadets this year, introduced at the counselors' convention in Des Moines, Iowa, is "20/20 Vision" based on Luke 6:39-40. The theme and verse is meant to help boys and men alike to be fully trained and more like their teacher, Jesus Christ. In fact, that has been the goal of the Calvinist Cadet Corps since it was founded in 1952—helping boys to grow more Christlike in all areas of life.

Youth Unlimited: In 2009 Youth Unlimited (YU) was blessed with the opportunity to serve 482 Christian Reformed Churches and over 3,000 of its youth. Students experienced Christ through Convention, SERVE, ENCOUNTER and the Where U At? Urban Youth Conference, youth workers and pastors were served through YU's online support, eQuip, Out of the Trenches, youth worker gatherings, and the Compass 21 tool.

We take our partnership with the CRC very seriously and are committed to give our best. Praying that through working together youth will see that God cares deeply for them and as a result they will commit their lives to him and serve him wherever he leads.