

FALL 2016

GLOBAL MISSION

- Back to God Ministries International
- Home Missions
- World Missions
- Timothy Leadership Training Institute

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

- Pastor Church Resources
- Sustaining Pastoral and Congregational Excellence
- Chaplaincy and Care Ministry
- Candidacy Committee
- Ministry in Canada
- Classis Renewal (no report)
- The Church Renewal Lab – Calvin Theological Seminary (no report)
- Ridder Church Renewal
- Reformed Leadership Initiative

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION AND WORSHIP

- Worship Ministries
- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

FAITH FORMATION

- Faith Formation Ministries
- Calvin College
- ServiceLink (no report)
- Dynamic Youth Ministries
 - Calvinist Cadet Corps
 - GEMS Girls' Clubs
 - Youth Unlimited

MERCY AND JUSTICE

- World Renew
- Centre for Public Dialogue
- Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee
- Office of Social Justice
- Safe Church Ministry
- Race Relations
- Disability Concerns
- Partners Worldwide

Our Journey 2020

Dear partner in ministry,

There's something about a journey that's exciting and invigorating. A promise of new horizons, new possibilities, new challenges. We in the Christian Reformed Church are on such a journey. It's called *Our Journey 2020* – "*Our Journey*" because we're on it together; "*2020*" to remind us that this is just one stage of a journey that will see us living and growing together in new ways and new places.

Some of the most interesting journeys happen when you know where you are going, but not exactly how to get there. This is that kind of a trip. CRC members and leaders across Canada and the United States have told us about the challenges their churches are facing. These challenges framed the goals, or "desired futures," showing where we need to go. But how to get there – and where to go first – will be different for each congregation.

We have a variety of resources to help you envision where this journey might take your church. They will be coming to your classis beginning this fall, but you can get a preview by visiting crcna.org/OurJourney. Also check out the exciting new videos on the CRC Vimeo site:

- [Our Journey: Identity](#)
- [Our Journey: Church and Community](#)
- [Our Journey: Discipleship](#)
- [Our Journey: Leadership](#)

This journey is a challenging undertaking, but our hopes are not tied to what we can do. In the words of 1 Thess. 5:24, "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." As we walk together into these desired futures, we will become the people that we hear God calling us to be.

Steven Timmermans
Executive Director,
Christian Reformed Church in North
America



Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) uses media to proclaim the gospel worldwide – at times in places where people would have no other access to God's Word. We are grateful for CRC congregations and individuals who faithfully support this vital ministry.

In India, 97 percent of the people do not know Jesus as Savior, and many of them have never even heard his name! BTGMI works with Words of Hope and partners in India to bring God's Word to the unreached. Our 2016-17 annual ministry focus highlights this need and how we are proclaiming the gospel there. In September, churches will receive a DVD and bulletin insert to let you know about the ways people in India are coming to faith in Christ. Synod has suggested that churches designate November 13 as Back to God Ministries Sunday and receive an offering for media ministry.

A leading Chinese professor documented the incredible growth of the Christian population in China. Our Chinese ministry team is growing as a leader in media outreach among Chinese churches and Christian media organizations. In the past several months the BTGMI Chinese team hosted three 'New Media' leadership conferences to address the challenge of meeting the needs of the growing church in China. Our *Be Thou My Rhythm* app provides Reformed discipleship resources for an average

of 440,000 readers each day.

Over 260 listener communities throughout Indonesia continue to provide a safe and encouraging place for seekers and new believers to grow in faith. People come together to listen to and discuss BTGM! broadcasts and to pray for one another. One member, Mr. Apit, was banished from his village after he became a Christian. He fled to Cijangkar, where other Christians were living. He now uses his new home to host a listener community. Mr. Apit asks, "Pray that our faith will be strong."

BacktoGod.net

Home Missions

Home Missions is committed to answering God's call to bring shalom to lives and communities. With you, we're working to start and strengthen churches and campus ministries that bring transformation and new life. As we read in Article 41 of Our World Belongs to God: "The Spirit calls all members to embrace God's mission in their neighborhoods . . . we repent of leaving this work to a few, for this mission is central to our being."

- Since June 1, 2016, Home Missions has begun partnerships with **nine new church plants** across the continent. Home Missions currently partners with 40 church plants who have access to coaching, training, resources, and funding, thanks to partnerships with congregations, classes, and donors.

- A core value of Home Missions' work is **partnership and collaboration**. At present, Home Missions is partnering with, or is helping congregations connect to, the Ridder Initiative, the Reformed Leadership Initiative, Deeper Journey, Renewal Lab at Calvin Theological Seminary, Dunamis Fellowship, and local leadership development networks.

- Home Missions, in partnership with the Missional Network, is trying a new initiative called **Go Local**. We're excited to launch this new initiative in three pilot sites – Classis Chatham, Classis Grand Rapids North, and in Western Canada. In each, a cluster of five to seven congregations and their pastors will be identified who desire to be a mission-centered worshiping community. For 18 months they will discern, experiment, and reflect to

address challenges of doing ministry in their local context.

- In Eastern Canada, Home Missions partners with **Ridder Church Renewal** to create a safe space for real transformation for church leaders. Since 2013, 24 congregations have been participating in this journey. Participants make a 30-month commitment to personal faith renewal.

- Christian Reformed **campus ministries** are active and growing on more than 33 campuses. In a changing culture and a rapidly changing landscape of higher education, our campus ministries continue to adapt to new challenges. Partnerships are forming, and new ways of joining in God's mission within higher education are emerging.

crhm.org

World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) exists to glorify God by leading the CRC to respond obediently to our Lord's commission to witness to the good news of God's kingdom and make disciples of all nations.

CRWM has filled five new missionary positions. These missionaries are currently in the support network development stage of their service and will head out for the field when this is in place. **Diana Boot** will be serving in Uganda, helping local teachers and school administrators apply their faith to the school and classroom. **David Kromminga and Mary Buteyn** will be serving in Germany, working with the Berlin City Mission in ministry to refugees. **Justin Van Zee** will be serving in Cambodia, working to develop leaders and helping Cambodians apply a biblical framework to their life and work. **Cody and Jessica Zuiderveen** will be serving in Haiti, developing youth leadership and discipleship programs and mentoring young people. One more missionary couple was appointed to serve in Asia to work with Christians to grow the local church.

CRWM is helping churches draw Service and Learning Teams together from their congregations to work with local church members in the Dominican Republic or Haiti to construct a small church building or ministry center. If your church wants to serve in

this way, please visit crwm.org/go or call CRWM at 800-346-0075.

Over the past few months there have been growing security concerns for some of our missionaries serving in Nepal, Russia, and Bangladesh. There have been increased reports of persecution of Christian workers and, in some countries, government policies that limit the ability of Christian workers to continue their ministry. Please pray for all the missionaries and Christians in these countries who are working to make Christ known.

crwm.org

Timothy Leadership Training Institute

Already affiliated with a number of agencies of the CRCNA, TLTI has joined forces with the CRC in order to work together more effectively. The TLT program began almost 20 years ago through the efforts of a number of CRC leaders and educators.

The new arrangement will help to bring financial stability to TLTI and to connect CRC ministries and programs more closely in the work of training pastors and ministry leaders worldwide. With more than 2,000 locally supported trainers working in over 30 languages and 50 countries, efforts are focused on pastors and lay leaders. Continuing the relationships with more than 150 denominations from around the world, TLTI is now in a better position to experience ministry growth.

Often TLT participants live in remote locations and have no access to other ministry training. The worldwide impact of an accessible training program can be seen through countless success stories from the field. A recent example is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Pastor Pierre Mulumba Kasonga reports on a July training that took place in Ilebo.

Fifty-six participants from 31 churches in the Kasai District met to report on action plans created during their previous session and to receive training in the fourth manual: *Biblical Preaching*. As they reported on action plans implemented after the third manual, *From Harm to Harmony in the Family*, pastors shared stories of healing in a social environment where

sexual violation is customarily neither recognized nor condemned.

We would like to express our appreciation for the support and encouragement of the many people and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church, and we look forward to continued reports of changed lives and transformed communities.

www.tlti.org/



Pastor Church Resources

Pastor Church Resources is involved with the administration and distribution of several grants, including the following:

- Connections: Embedding Regional Resourcing in the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Lilly Endowment, Inc., in Indianapolis, Ind., has awarded the Christian Reformed Church a nearly \$1 million grant to fund this three-and-a-half-year pilot project that seeks to create an innovative model of coordinated regional resourcing for congregations.

In an era in which the CRC, like other denominations, is faced with many changes and challenges, this project will help the denomination adapt and connect in new ways with its congregations. This grant will enable congregations to explore resources for ministry and projects that they are passionate about. It will help generate creativity in congregations and their leaders. The hope is that this model will be replicated in additional regions after the pilot project is completed.

Lis Van Harten, a staff member of Pastor Church Resources, is the project director. If you have any questions, contact her at Ivanharten@crcna.org or 877-279-9994 x2805 (toll free).

- Spiritual Vitality in Pastors Project

The Christian Reformed Church is involved with the Spiritual Vitality in Pastors Project, a 16-month spiritual-formation journey funded by a matching grant from Lilly Endowment's Pastoral Excellence Network and three

CRC ministries: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Faith Formation Ministries, and Pastor Church Resources.

The project involves 16 ordained pastors (ministers of the Word or commissioned pastors) who are working full-time in parish ministry. It began in September 2015.

Goals of the project are to provide pastors with tools, resources, and encouragement for assessing and strengthening their own spiritual formation. Pastors engage in a number of activities including attending retreats, working with a spiritual director, taking a variety of assessments, reading, and meeting with colleagues.

If you have any questions, contact Lis Van Harten: Ivanharten@crcna.org or 877-279-9994 x2805 (toll free).

- Reformed Leadership Initiative (RLI)

See the report by Denise Posie, a staff member of Pastor Church Resources who is the CRC co-leader of this initiative.

crcna.org/pcr

Sustaining Pastoral and Congregational Excellence

Ten years ago, Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) was created to promote healthy congregations. It was specifically for smaller congregations made up of 150 or fewer active, adult, professing members. So what has happened in those 10 years? A lot of amazing ministry!

First, the numbers:

- Of the current 1,048 CRC churches, 689 are eligible to participate in SCE.
- To date, 92 percent of eligible Canadian churches (111 out of 121) and 71 percent of eligible U.S. churches (401 out of 568) have participated.
- 263 Health and Renewal grants have been awarded, resulting in new ministry in over 200 churches.
- More than 25 percent of these new ministries have been sustained after funding ended.

Second, the impact:

- "This project has really lit a fire within

our congregation – to be involved together as a church family. It is so good to hear positive things about our church from those who serve/live in our community."

- "My perception of outreach ministry has been completely turned around."
- "The SCE grant was simply instrumental in changing the momentum of this congregation, and people wanted to be a part of it."

Third, the outcomes:

- "The project has given us a clear and definable future at a time when we were not sure what to do next."
- "The greatest reward the congregation has experienced from the project is an awakening and revival of the men of the church."
- "About 75 percent of our members are active in small groups. This is about double the amount from before the project began."

Ten years later:

- Four out of the nine proposals submitted in June were from churches with no SCE experience.
- Churches are grateful. "One must be thankful to be part of a denomination that risks being a bit vulnerable in the attempt to encourage health and excellence."
- Interest remains strong. Health is being fostered in congregations and their communities. Ministry is happening.

And God is being glorified.

crcna.org/sce; crcna.org/spe

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

This year marks our 75th year as a ministry of the CRCNA (though unofficial chaplaincy began over 100 years ago), and much of our activity this year is built around celebrating that milestone.

We launched the celebration at our Chaplains Conference in early June, where we hosted 86 of our chaplains (and spouses) along with speakers and other guests from all over the U.S. and Canada. This year's theme was "Spirituality and Psychology – Duality or Dichotomy." Our keynote speakers – Dr. Kenneth Pargament and Dr. Jason Nieuwsma – have each played a significant role in researching and

writing about this reunion of concepts that many, since Freud, have tried to separate.

We reported at synod, emphasizing the amazing growth of this ministry from a handful of military chaplains during World Wars I and II to almost 150 chaplains serving today in many categories of crisis care. We hope to celebrate this during Synod 2017 as we wrap up this anniversary year.

We've collected historical details, produced a short video, and are noting this milestone in other ways, such as updates to our website. We hope and pray that this exciting ministry will continue to grow into the future.

Our rotation of visits took us most recently to Alaska, where we have one military chaplain (Ft. Wainwright, Fairbanks) and one corrections chaplain (Anchorage). We have just begun to arrange another round of visits to speak with students at educational institutions. We typically do six to eight of these visits per year and enjoy speaking with 10 - 50 students in each location.

As Chaplaincy and Care continues to grow to become one of the larger and more cost-effective ministries of the CRCNA, we hope that churches will see chaplains as an important part of their outreach to a hurting world.

For information and a brief review of our history, check out recent changes and additions to our website.

crcna.org/chaplaincy

Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee is the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church that coordinates and facilitates the ordination of ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors. We provide assistance to individuals, congregations, and classes in this process.

In June 2016, synod approved 47 persons as candidates and granted extensions of candidacy to 25 additional persons. The months of summer and fall are busy with supporting congregations and these candidates as they converse, discern, and make commitments to serve the Lord together. The list of candidates and their status is kept up to date on our website: www.crcna.org/candidacy.

As fall classis meetings approach, much energy is exerted to complete the process of pastoral affiliation under Church Order Article 8. This process is supported by the Candidacy Committee and addresses pastors who are already ordained in another denomination and seek to serve within a Christian Reformed congregation. The process presumes and requires active engagement with leaders at the classical level.

This fall, the Candidacy Committee staff will be working to facilitate a new initiative for encouraging and supporting continuing education for pastors and continuing education policies for pastors at the congregational level. Synod 2016 approved these new initiatives, as recorded in the *Acts of Synod 2016* (pp. 849-51). Synod 2016 also instructed the Candidacy Committee to develop further the matters addressed in a report to Synod 2016 regarding uses and practices surrounding the office of commissioned pastor. The hope is that a report will be ready for Synod 2017. Any congregations and individuals that have questions or suggestions regarding the office of commissioned pastor are invited to read the report to Synod 2016 (*Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 262-75) and submit their comments to the Candidacy Committee.

crcna.org/candidacy

Ministry in Canada

Every day, the CRC in Canada is becoming stronger and more capable in being the partner/servant in ministry that church leaders want us to be.

The National Gathering, held in May in Ontario, included leaders from across Canada weighing in on the future direction of the church. We are so grateful for all who attended and trust their voice is being heard across Canada. For an encouraging summary, videos, and all the content, head to <http://www.crcna.org/gatherings/canadian-gathering-2016>

ServiceLink's mandate has changed to make them the ministry through which Canadian churches can have any and all ministry hopes addressed – kind of a one-stop shop for local leaders to sort out where to find resources, make plans, get coaches, and find other kinds of assistance that the ministries

or agencies of the CRCNA can provide. So feel free to call in!

In connection with efforts to serve churches, we are experimenting in ways that will ultimately enable stronger local ministries: from communication platforms, to introducing a missional and informative CRC app for phones, to supporting regional coaches and "behaviours of presence." We are encouraged that, denominationally speaking, we are leaning into the heart of the matter – the local church.

Proof of this kind of effort is found in the success of the recent Youth Ministry Pilot Project, which now boasts a Youth Ministry Champion in every Canadian classis. Look them up to help propel the faith of your church! As well, the Centre for Public Dialogue has expanded its repertoire of issues. That means more opportunities for Canadian churches to contribute in areas of social justice and advocacy.

Refugee consideration and support by local churches shows the worth of all of us working together. We estimate that about 75 percent of Canadian churches have done something significant in the area of ministry to refugees in the past year. Well done!

We need to thank God for all his work in us!

crcna.org/Canada

Classis Renewal

(No report this quarter.)

network.crcna.org/classis

Church Renewal Lab

(No report this quarter.)

calvinseminary.edu/the-renewal-lab/

Ridder Church Renewal

A Barna survey in 2012 discovered that 46 percent of people who had been to a church before said their lives had not been changed at all by it. Other research indicates that younger adults view church as optional or irrelevant to their lives.

The context of North America today presents multiple challenges for the local church. As the fall ministry

season begins, 96 RCA and CRC churches will again gather in six regions across the U.S. and Canada to continue a learning process that aims to transform pastors, congregations, and communities.

This renewal process is guided by the goal of missional living – faithful and fruitful mission in the context in which God calls a local congregation.

Attended by pastors and teams of congregational leaders, the six fall retreats (in Sioux Falls, S.D.; Green Lake, Wis.; Vancouver, B.C.; Muskegon, Mich.; Guelph, Ont.; and Ellenville, N.Y.) will help churches attain a clear, shared, and compelling picture of their current realities, as well as understand congregations as emotional systems.

One central component of the Ridder Church Renewal process is *Faithwalking*. It is a personal transformation process in which pastors learn to identify and address obstacles in their lives that get in the way of living fully into the mission of God. *Faithwalking* seeks to develop catalysts for the church to become the body of Christ in the various communities in which the church is engaged.

This year we are encouraging churches to host their own *Faithwalking* retreats to expand personal transformation throughout the congregation and into the community. Please pray for the leaders who teach at the retreats and for all pastors and congregation leaders who will attend this fall. These retreats are key moments for the renewal of local churches.

westernsem.edu/journey/ridder

Reformed Leadership Initiative

The Reformed Leadership Initiative (RLI) is a two-year pilot project of “Congregational Leadership Learning Networks” (CLLN) that will serve as the first step in developing a diverse, distributed network for congregational leadership training. RLI is a collaboration of the CRCNA, the RCA, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), and Western Theological Seminary (WTS) and is aimed at serving local congregations as they engage in mission and ministry.

Monthly coaching is a critical component in coming alongside our churches to work through their leadership challenges and opportunities, as identified by Congregational Leadership Equipping Teams (CLET). These teams consist of the pastor(s) and up to five congregational leaders from each church. Our coaching sessions will provide an opportunity for coaches to help leaders reflect deeper, evaluate their practices, and to consider next steps in growing leaders. Through these ongoing coaching sessions with CLETs and in network gatherings, leaders will imagine, discover, and experiment with current and new leadership models and processes to support flourishing churches and ministries.

Each CLLN is positioned well to receive coaching in all six RLI locations: Hamilton, Ont. (Classis Hamilton), Johnston, Iowa (Classis Central Plains and Classis Northcentral Iowa), Paramount, Calif. (Spanish speaking, not geography specific), New Brunswick Theological Seminary, N.J. (Classis Hackensack), New Jersey (Korean speaking, not geography specific), and Central California (Classis Central California). Each location has its unique calling and cultural context.

Please pray for the Spirit’s guidance and wisdom for the coaches and the CLETs as they work, learn, and grow together in the next nine months of the RLI project.

crcna.org/ministries/initiatives/together-again



Worship Ministries

Reformed Worship:

Reformed Worship, published by Worship Ministries, is celebrating its 30th anniversary – for over 30 years the quarterly journal has been collecting worship ideas, resources, and services from the local church and sharing them along with articles that spark creativity and growth. As we launch into a new church year, *RW* will change subscription systems, allowing us to create an online version of the journal and better serve our

subscribers. For more information or to subscribe, go to

www.reformedworship.org or email info@reformedworship.org.

Peer Learning Groups

Planning worship in the church is important and demanding. [Peer learning groups](#) for worship leaders, planners, directors, pastors, and ministers of music are being formed to encourage and equip these faithful servants. The groups will share, pray together, and learn from [Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship](#) by Barbara Newman, or [The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World](#) by Sandra Van Opstal. These study books and materials are available free of charge. Additional expenses (food, technology, or travel) are the responsibility of group members. For more information on how to convene or join a group, email or call us.

Spread the Word

Worship Ministries desires to learn about resources that already exist, and work to connect worship leaders, musicians, artists, and pastors, who can often feel rather alone amid the demands of weekly services, to a community that actively seeks to support them. Spread the word and encourage your area’s worship leaders, planners, musicians, artists, pastors to plug in by

- signing up for our monthly e-newsletter at crcna.org/Worship.
- joining the Facebook page: CRC Worship Ministries.
- joining a Peer Learning Group (new groups are forming this fall).
- dropping us a line!

Don’t hesitate to email (worship@crcna.org) or give one of our staff a call (1-800-333-8300).

crcna.org/Worship

Calvin Theological Seminary

Convocation: Wednesday, Sept. 7, marked the official beginning of the 141st academic year at Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Lugene Schemper, Theological Librarian for both Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, spoke. The same day, a retirement reception for

Rev. Schemper was held to mark the celebration and conclusion of 16 years of ministry as Theological Librarian.

International Student Orientation and Gateway: New students, and especially new international students, have the opportunity to get to know one another and the seminary by meeting prior to the start of a new semester in a way intended to build community and foster a hospitable learning environment. This fall we will welcome new international students from China, India, Japan, Kenya, South Korea, Nepal, and Sweden out of a total of nearly 70 new students.

New Faculty: This fall marks the beginning of the teaching ministry of Dr. Matt Tuininga (Moral Theology) and Dr. Geoff Vandermolen (Director of Vocational Formation). We give thanks for God's provision in bringing them to Calvin Theological Seminary to join others in service to the church.

Recordings Now Available from Loving Your Neighbor Conference: Jesus tells us, "Love your neighbor as yourself." But what does that mean for us today? Calvin Seminary was able to host a significant conference seeking to provide a variety of perspectives on the question "What Does 'Love Your Neighbor' Mean Today?" The conference featured Dr. Richard Mouw, Professor of Faith and Public Life and President *emeritus* at Fuller Theological Seminary, as well as many of the newer faculty members at Calvin Theological Seminary. Free recordings of these sessions are now available at calvinseminary.edu/neighbor-videos/.

Thank you for your prayers and encouragement for the beginning of a new academic year!

calvinseminary.edu

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

At the **Calvin Institute of Christian Worship**, we are looking forward to developing several **trajectories of learning**:

– In October we will host, along with Program Affiliate David M. Bailey of Arrabon, a consultation on **worship and intergenerational urban ministry**. Our goals are to learn about worship, intergenerational faith

formation, and urban ministry from a variety of contexts across North America; to form new friendships and strengthen ties for ministry across the body of Christ; and to imagine what kinds of resources, partnerships, and practices could strengthen future work in this area. We have invited participants from a variety of urban contexts, ethnic and cultural groups, and Christian denominations to participate in this consultation.

– We anticipate the print release of an academic study of the **visual arts in worship** by art history professor Lisa J. DeBoer of Westmont College. DeBoer's *Visual Arts in the Worshiping Church* (Eerdmans) will focus and deepen the thinking of pastors, worship leaders, artists, students, and laypeople regarding what the arts might do in the midst of their congregations. Pre-order a copy a copy from Eerdmans or through Amazon.com.

– In this fall season many worshiping communities will consider applying for a Vital Worship Grant (worship.calvin.edu/grants/). Over the years many CRC congregations have participated in this **ecumenical grants program**. Consider applying for 2017 (online application due Jan. 10, 2017).

Stay connected with all our programming through our **social media feeds**:

- facebook.com/WorshipRenewal/
- instagram.com/worship_institute/
- twitter.com/cicw
- youtube.com/user/worshiprenewal/
- vimeo.com/cicw
- worship.calvin.edu/about/contact.htm#rss

worship.calvin.edu



Faith Formation Ministries

Congregations always have a culture.

It isn't written down in mission statements or council minutes. Church culture just *is*. Walk in Sunday morning, and you will gradually sense who is welcome. You'll find what

matters, and what doesn't, through things like communion furniture, the songs, and the preaching. And hopefully you will also notice who is standing in corners during the coffee hour, whose voices aren't present in worship, and what furniture and songs are missing.

We are called to *recognize* what culture lives in our congregations. But we are also called to *shape* that culture to reflect the grace and mercy of God.

Many ministry leaders throughout the CRC are voicing the need to be more intentional about the discipleship and faith formation practices of their congregations. As Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) listens to them, we recognize how challenging this desire is, and this has led us to develop a [Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture](#) cohort.

We are seeking twenty congregations to participate. The cohort will run from October 2016 to January 2018, to grow stronger, grace-shaped faith formation cultures within those congregations.

Last year we offered a cohort on the building blocks of faith. One church leader said, "Through participating in the cohort, we felt empowered to look at the faith formation process as a congregation." We know that congregations know their own context best, so we aren't coming to congregations with prescriptions. Instead, we seek to walk with congregations as they discern the Spirit's guiding in how best to serve and reflect Christ in their context.

It is our hope that by working with a coach and learning from other congregations, congregational leaders will find the inspiration and courage to try something new.

For more information about the Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture cohort, visit crcna.org/FaithFormation/cohort.

crcna.org/FaithFormation

Calvin College

Christ's story of renewal is being told at Calvin College. The college has a new bachelor's degree program being offered in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary and the Michigan State Department of Corrections. The newly accredited

program is called the [Calvin Prison Initiative](#), and it gives 20 inmates each year the opportunity to begin pursuing a [bachelor of arts degree in ministry leadership](#).

Inmates from any of the 31 prisons in the Michigan Department of Corrections system can apply to the program, and each August the admitted students are transferred to Handlon Prison, where they attend classes taught by Calvin faculty. The program is funded by friends and donors of the college and seminary and by faculty who dedicate the extra time needed to teach in this environment. Our hope and expectation is to graduate Christ's agents of renewal who will go back to prisons across the state and have a transformative effect on the lives of those around them. The stories of these students demonstrate that the Calvin mission cannot be constrained by walls or fences. To God be the glory!

Calvin prepares the heart and mind for rigorous inquiry, always seeking God's truth. Congratulations to the following award winners as they continue to pursue God's truth and wisdom:

- [Crystal Bruxvoort](#) was honored as the 2016 winner of the Calvin Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching.
- Recent Calvin graduate John Muyskens was part of a team of *Washington Post* reporters and editors honored with the [Pulitzer Prize](#) in the National Reporting category.
- Calvin history professor emeritus Jim Bratt is a [Fulbright Scholar](#) for the third time and will be headed to Xiamen, China, to teach at Xiamen University.

Ever wonder what makes Calvin unique? In this short [video](#) (<http://tinyurl.com/freeandfaithful>), students share a bit of what they've discovered during their journeys at Calvin, and Professor John Witvliet shares insights into the benefits of a Reformed Christian education.

[calvin.edu](#)

ServiceLink

(No report this quarter.)

[crcna.org/servicelink](#)

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps

The Cadet organization continues to work toward its mission of helping boys become more Christlike in all areas of life. Fall is when our clubs start meeting again for a new season. Men are stepping forward to be counselors, and many boys are beginning to experience what cadetting will mean for them. While some churches are unfortunately deciding to cease their Cadet programs, other churches are joining us and starting new clubs, with new opportunities to bring Christ to boys in locations from coast to coast across Canada and the U.S. We pray for each of the Cadet clubs as they start this season, asking that God use the relationships between men and boys to give boys an example of what it means to live for Jesus.

A leadership team of three men spent 19 days in July/August traveling through Kenya. The Cadet ministry is expanding to new locations there, and the team saw many examples of Christ's working in the lives of local boys. Churches in Kenya are looking for ways to reach the boy-child, who has been neglected with the recent emphasis on education and opportunities for girls around the world. Cadets provides an option for them to reach boys before they get involved with radical groups involved in terrorism and violence. Several training sessions were offered to equip men in their work of mentoring boys. We pray for the people involved in expanding the Cadet program in Kenya and more recently in Uganda.

We are thankful for the ongoing prayer support that we receive, allowing God's message to be delivered to boys in Canada, the U.S., and around the world.

[calvinistcadets.org](#)

GEMS Girls' Clubs

(Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior)

A new season is beginning for GEMS Girls' Clubs all over the world. This year, clubs will be studying 1 Thessalonians 3:12 as women and girls learn what it means that God's love overflows.

In July over 360 women gathered to gain ideas and inspiration about this

new annual theme and to receive encouragement and support for their work with girls. Our annual leadership conference is an amazing time of worship and fellowship for counselors. GEMS also hosts training workshops around the U.S. and Canada every fall to help ensure that women are equipped to mentor the girls in their clubs.

Leadership training is a vital part of fulfilling our mission to help bring girls into a living, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Please join us in praying that women find a way to attend a local or international training event and receive the tools they need to come alongside the girls they mentor.

We are also thankful for a successful GEMS camp this past August. Over 180 junior high girls gathered for a week of fun, friendship, and learning about their value as children of God. Despite some rain, the girls, counselors, and volunteers had a great time.

The fall, the Esther School—an outreach of GEMS in Zambia—will welcome a new class of preschoolers. The continued support of clubs throughout North America is important to the success of the school, which now offers classes through grade 4. Our GEMS Clubs in North America are inspired by the school and learn more about what it means to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God as they serve the students in Zambia.

[gemsgc.org](#)

Youth Unlimited

This summer, 26 congregations hosted SERVE trips attended by nearly 1,400 students and leaders from 140 Christian Reformed congregations! In addition, the students collectively gave over 39,000 hours of hands and heart service in the name of Christ at the local congregations and SERVE sites.

As often is the case with such experiences, when space is created for students to worship, read the Bible, serve others, share in small groups, and pray, the Holy Spirit moves powerfully! We strongly encourage you to visit [youthunlimited.org](#), where you can connect to our Facebook, Twitter, or Blog to see pictures and read the stories of impact!

The church is alive and your (CRC) students are a significant part of the

living, breathing church! This summer at every Youth Unlimited SERVE experience, the Scripture focus came from the book of Mark. Through this study, students were challenged to allow Jesus to walk with them through life, redeeming their difficult times and leading them into making a positive mark on others, their community, and this world. Join Youth Unlimited in praying that the work of the Holy Spirit in each student has a ripple effect felt in churches and communities across Canada and the United States.

Youth Unlimited is truly honored and blessed to be able to serve the CRC and its students. We do not take this calling lightly. You have our commitment that we will continue to give our very best. Your students and the church are the way Christ will shine his light and love in our world, and we desire to help them shine brightly!

If you desire to join us in this great adventure of investing into students and the church, please contact us. We would be honored to serve with you!

Youth Unlimited – students/churches/faith-forming experiences!

youthunlimited.org/



World Renew

World Renew, with your help, is changing the story among hundreds of thousands of people around the world.

In many parts of the world, people's stories begin in a place of hardship. Illiteracy and inadequate health care, hunger, and poverty are a regular part of life.

Through God's grace, people's hard work, and support like yours, however, many of these men, women, and children are taking steps to improve their lives.

Every day World Renew serves people who are rewriting their stories:

- from poverty to plenty
- from illiterate to educated
- from victims of disaster to empowered survivors

This change is not just material. Jesus is the greatest story changer of all. He turned fishermen into disciples, fallen women into followers, and persecutors into missionaries.

That's why, as World Renew seeks to help people in need, we work through churches and Christian partners in communities around the world to tackle poverty, disaster, and injustice.

Many men and women around the world have been shaped by stories about their poverty. They may believe that poverty is their destiny, that human rights and social equity don't apply to them, or that their dreams and aspirations are not important.

As people participate with World Renew's development, disaster response, and justice programs in their community, they begin to accept their value as children of God, recognizing their God-given talents and abilities, tapping into their potential as God's imagebearers, and becoming equipped to change their own stories for the long term.

This fall we invite you to join us in changing the story. During the autumn World Hunger Campaign, culminating on World Hunger Sunday, please give generously of your time, prayers, talents, and financial gifts to bless others. World Renew will use your gifts to combat poverty, disaster, and injustice around the world in Jesus' name.

Learn more at worldrenew.net/worldhunger.

worldrenew.net

Centre for Public Dialogue

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue helps Canadian congregations do justice so that each of God's imagebearers has the opportunity to thrive. Our current focus areas are Indigenous justice, human trafficking, refugee justice, climate change, and assisted dying.

Highlights this quarter include

- launching a [new website](#) that features issue-specific worship resources to help congregations learn about and reflect on God's heart for justice.

- adding a new action center to the website to make it easier for Canadians to contact their Members of Parliament. This is a huge step toward empowering CRC and RCA members to be engaged Christian citizens.

- continuing to form relationships with new Members of Parliament through letters and visits.

- deepening our partnerships on our newer focus areas (climate change and human trafficking). For example, we hosted a guest post on our blog, Do Justice, from Jennifer Lucking, an expert on human trafficking working with the Reformed Church in America's Regional Synod of Canada.

Also on Do Justice, we ran a series called [How to Stay in Conversation with "the Other Side"](#); this galvanized leaders from across the denomination to write about the need for respectful dialogue across differences. With increasingly polarized political and religious conversations on both sides of the border, our office seeks to inspire true dialogue.

crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue.cfm

Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee

The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC) works to educate and mobilize CRC members and congregations to live in reconciled relationships as covenant (treaty) people before our Creator.

CAMC works toward three goals:

- **Awareness and Education** of the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada, of the present lived reality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and of the need for reconciliation and renewed relationships.

- **Engaging and Building Relationships** with our Aboriginal neighbors to better understand each other and journey down the path of justice and right relationships.

- **Advocacy and Seeking Justice** for Aboriginal peoples.

This past July, Shannon Perez, Justice and Reconciliation Mobilizer and staff support to CAMC, along with Bernadette Arthur, coordinator of the Office of Race Relations, traveled to

Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation to learn about what it means to be in relationship with First Nations people in their community. Thea deGroot and Israel Cooper were also part of the trip. The group participated in community games and BBQ, joined a fishing derby, built a Sweat Lodge, met in a sharing circle breakfast with the elders of the community, and had teachings about the wumpum belt treaty. They learned about the challenges of living in a remote community and spent time with members learning about relationship building and the dynamics of entering into a community even when invited. Shannon and Bernadette will continue working with Thea and Israel in supporting their efforts for reconciliation in their own communities.

CAMC will also continue working on fulfilling the Calls to Action #59 and 60 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These urge church leaders and members to learn about residential schools and the legacies of colonization.

The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee is continuing its work on bulletin covers and inserts for Aboriginal Ministry Sunday in June. Stay tuned for information coming your way about next year's theme.

crcna.org/aboriginal

Office of Social Justice

The Climate Witness Project, the Blessing Not Burden campaign, prayer resources for current events, and a new advocacy tool are the recent emphasis of the Office of Social Justice education and advocacy efforts.

The Climate Witness Project (CWP) brought together over 200 CRC members in 35 congregations across the U.S. and Canada to educate, act, and advocate around climate change. To support these and other churches who wish to participate, CWP launched a new website (crcna.org/cwp) with educational and worship resources, advocacy opportunities, ideas for churches to faithfully steward their energy consumption, and other ways to get involved.

Over 1,000 people have signed the Blessing Not Burden campaign pledge to change the conversation about

immigrants and ask elected officials to enact laws reflecting that immigrants are a blessing (BlessingNotBurden.org).

In response to the shootings of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the Dallas police officers (Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Michael J. Smith, Brent Thompson, and Patrick Zamarripa) in July, OSJ sent out a special edition of prayers called "A Prayer of Love in the Face of Violence" with prayers, litanies, and other worship resources to address those events in personal prayer or during Sunday worship. The article was viewed over 2,500 times, shared over 100 times on Facebook, used by many churches in their Sunday morning worship, and quoted at length in an Mlive.com article.

Phone2Action is the new advocacy tool OSJ is using to offer expanded advocacy opportunities. This new tool allows people in both the U.S. and Canada to contact their elected officials via email, phone, and even social media; it also has features that allow OSJ to engage advocates via text messaging. We are excited about the creative possibilities this tool offers, making it easier for CRC members to steward their voices to help create a more just society.

justice.crcna.org

Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention, and response.

The [Safe Church](#) office recorded almost 200 interactions in the third quarter of 2016 – including over 40 from Canada – with keywords like awareness, team, situation of abuse, policy, and Circle of Grace. In addition, congregations are served by volunteer safe church team members who are active across the U.S. and Canada. We provide a bimonthly electronic newsletter, conversation opportunities on [The Network](#), and a monthly prayer guide for people committed to pray for Safe Church.

The work of Safe Church and other ministries that make up JIMA (Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy) is grounded in the value that all people possess the divine image of their creator. The Lord is honored as we reflect this value in our congregations

and communities; abuse has no place here.

Awareness: Synod 2016 highlighted the many resources available on the Safe Church website and designated September 25 as [Abuse Awareness Sunday](#). We've worked hard to make resources available, including our [new video](#).

Prevention: [Circle of Grace](#), used by a growing number of CRC congregations, was featured in an event this spring at Bethany CRC in New Mexico, funded partially by a Safe Church mini-grant. We hope the number of mini-grants will also grow to support local prevention efforts.

Response: Recently when we asked a team member if she would be willing to make a call to someone in her area who had contacted our office for assistance, her response was, "Yes, yes, and yes! I would be honored." [Team members](#) are blessed as they are a blessing to others in their "walk-alongside" role to persons who have experienced abuse.

Safe church ministry works when we all work together.

www.crcna.org/safechurch

Race Relations

The Race Relations staff continues its work in sharing the CRCNA vision for reconciliation, diversity, and equality with congregational and classis leaders.

A highlight of our work this quarter was in helping to lead the Blanket Exercise at synod. We helped to develop a binational script that walked participants through the history of both our nations from a Native perspective. We were overjoyed that several Navajo leaders who had received this training in New Mexico earlier in the year, along with First Nations leaders from Canada, participated in leading the exercise with us.

We also played a key role in the Engage 2016 conference, this year's multiethnic conference. Engage was a rich time of lament, praise, and learning from each other and from leaders like Christena Cleveland, Anthony Carter, and Michelle Loyd-Paige. We hope you'll join us for the next one!

How can youth become leaders in reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples? This question led our Race Relations Canada Coordinator Bernadette to visit a remote fly-in reserve with the first Youth Ambassador of Reconciliation, her mentor, and Shannon Perez, our partner on the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee. The Youth Ambassador has already returned to her home community to begin leading neighbors in reconciliation efforts with local Indigenous groups.

After a brief leave of absence and considering other ministry opportunities, Rev. Esteban Lugo has chosen to resign from his position as director of Race Relations. We want to express our appreciation for Esteban's 12 years of service as the Director and wish him the best in his future endeavors. At the next Board of Trustees meeting, we will address the implications of Rev. Lugo's departure from the Office of Race Relations. In the interim, we welcome Rev. Shannon Jammal-Hollemans and Rev. Reggie Smith, who will share responsibilities for some of the director duties.

crcna.org/race

Disability Concerns

Research shows that nearly 1 in 4 pastors (23 percent) acknowledge having struggled with mental illness. A significant number also experience burnout. A Mental Health Task Force established by the Disability Concerns offices of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America has been concerned about how these situations are addressed and handled by pastors and councils. This is a sensitive issue. Sometimes a pastor may need a leave of absence.

The Task Force has developed a document called "Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons," which provides guidelines and suggestions for pastors and for church councils. We want this document to be made available and introduced to church leaders, and we believe that classis meetings are a good place to make that introduction.

The document recommends actions like the following:

- (for the pastor) Connect with your Regional Pastor as a support and as

an advocate alongside you in your conversations with your church council.

- (for the council) Pastoral care is important. Let the pastor and family guide you as to what they need. The need for emotional space varies and must be respected. It may be tempting to prescribe what should be done and when, but the details for an arrangement need to be worked out with the pastor and the pastor's health care providers.

In order to introduce this document, we have designed 15-, 45-, and 90-minute presentations that could be made at classis and include slide presentations, discussion questions, and sample case studies. If you decide to present this to your classis (which we hope you do), the presentation could be made by a mental health professional or a church or classis leader.

Find all of these materials by searching for "Guide for Clergy Leave" at network.crcna.org.

crcna.org/disability

Partners Worldwide

Sea to Sea 2017 registration is now live! Sea to Sea is a bicycling cause that fights global poverty through fundraising and awareness. Riders from around the world cycle from the west to east coasts of North America, advocating for hope, raising awareness about poverty, and raising funds to support Partners Worldwide and World Renew. [Learn more](#) about joining the ride, volunteer opportunities, or supporting Sea to Sea.

The Partners Worldwide global network affects lives and helps to alleviate poverty around the world, including here in our own backyard. We partner with eight Local Community Institutions (LCIs) across the U.S. to provide mentoring, training, access to capital, and advocacy tools. We praise God for the success of one of our members in Texas. Previously an addict, today Summer Shine is the owner of Luna Juice Bar and is passionate about helping other women in recovery. [Read her story](#).

Please pray for an emerging partnership in Jackson, Miss., that would provide mentoring and business training to locals. As a first-time

training effort, our business volunteers are energized about sharing their expertise and networks with entrepreneurs and emerging businesses. Pray that businesses will come forward to enroll in the course and in the mentoring program.

Partners Worldwide mobilizes long-term, hands-on global relationships to form a powerful Christian network that uses business as the way to create flourishing economic environments in all parts of the world. Our partnerships build up local capacity, catalyzing entrepreneurs and job creators around the world.

For impact stories and inspiration, follow Partners Worldwide on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and our [blog](#).

partnersworldwide.org