AGENDA FOR SYNOD

1999

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

June 12-19, 1999
Chapel ⁄ Auditorium
Redeemer College
Ancaster, Ontario

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PREFACE

Synod 1999 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 12, at 4:00 p.m. in the Chapel/Auditorium of Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. Rev. John Zantingh, recently retired pastor of Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 1999 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected.

A Service of Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 13, 1999, at 4:00 p.m. in Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, 61 Mohawk Road West, Hamilton, Ontario. Rev. J. Zantingh will officiate at this service.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 6 and 13. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

David H. Engelhard
General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

I. Note to delegates

A. Delegates who travel by automobile are urged to carpool if possible, to save on travel costs.

B. Plane travel is the most economical for delegates traveling long distances to synod because it eliminates lodging and meal expenses en route.

C. Synod provides accidental death and dismemberment insurance (up to $250,000) for delegates to synod. While there are exclusions and restrictions identified in the policy, travel and activites that are reasonably related to your participation in synod are covered from June 10 - June 22, 1999. Synod does not provide health insurance. U.S. delegates may wish to review their policies and purchase additional health insurance for the time they are at synod if their present policies do not provide adequate insurance outside the United States.

D. Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the *Agenda for Synod 1999* and all supplementary materials.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 1999 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

Synod 1954 stated that "the very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not 'report' " (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15). If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16).

III. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not taped. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being taped. Synod has designated that the office of the general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1989 concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions by media representatives and visitors:

A. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.

B. *Visitor privileges*
1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).
2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
    a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
    b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
    c. Videotaping is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).

(*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 445)

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 1999

Classis	Delegates	Alternates

Alberta North

Ministers	Martin T. Mobach	Ministers	Philip Stel
	Cecil Van Niejenhuis		John A. Ooms
Elders	Dirk W. Simmelink	Elders	Siebe Brouwer
	H. William Verveda		Harry Schuld

Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Ministers ....J. Cameron Fraser — Ministers ....Jake Corvers
Andrew G. Vander Leek — Cornelius Pool
Elders...............Peter De Boer — Elders...............Jan Veltkamp
Randall Huisman — Cornelis Kuipers

Arizona

Ministers ....Stephen R. Steenstra — Ministers ....Frederick J. Walhof
John Rop, Jr. — Harley G. Faber
Elders...............Harry A. Van Dam — Elders...............Rodney Hugen
Paul R. Bareman — Eduardo Gonzalez

Atlantic Northeast

Ministers ....Karl H. Bratt — Ministers ....Zachary G. Anderson
Stanley J. Vander Klay — Alvern Gelder
Elders...............Henry Kuperus — Elders...............Edward H. De Vries
Andrew Meinen — ————

B.C. North-West

Ministers ....Thomas W. Bomhof — Ministers ....James R. Poelman
Albert Helder — John Koster
Elders...............Art Numan — Elders...............John A. Vander Hoek
Robert Vander Veen — Garry Storteboom

B.C. South-East

Ministers ....Bert Slofstra — Ministers ....Albert Westerhuis
Gerrit Veeneman — Herb de Ruyter
Elders...............Harry deJong — Elders...............John Smid
Bill Aalders — Jack Vaandrager

California South

Ministers ....Il Yong Kang — Ministers ....Donald W. Lagerwey
John S. Oh — ————
Elders...............John Voortman — Elders...............Dirk Jasperse
Eugene Smith — ————

Central California

Ministers ....Bruce A. Persenaire — Ministers ....Calvin J. Friend
John J. Berends — George G. Vink
Elders...............David G. Verwer — Elders...............John V. Prins
Scott Kamper — Edward Brower

Classis	Delegates	Alternates

Chatham
Ministers	Dirk Miedema	Ministers	Jacob M. Van de Hoef
	Jake Kuipers		Geoffrey A. Vandermolen
Elders	Peter Kapteyn	Elders	Andy Vander Veen
	Richard Tjoelker		Gerrit De Boer

Chicago South
Ministers	Richard E. Williams	Ministers	Sam Hamstra, Jr.
	Anthony Van Zanten		Calvin J. Aardsma
Elders	Richard A. Molenhouse	Elders	John Wassenaar
	Jack L. Mudde		————

Columbia
Ministers	Perry J. Tinklenberg	Ministers	Jude J. Reardon
	Russell J. Van Antwerpen		————
Elders	David A. Koetje	Elders	Gerald L. Vrieling
	Steven J. Ahrenholz		Al Smeenk

Eastern Canada
Ministers	Henry P. Kranenburg	Ministers	Norman J. Visser
	George J. Rowaan		David H. Kromminga
Elders	Ralph Norg	Elders	J. Lauziere
	Michael Luchies		Clarence Van Der Heide

Georgetown
Ministers	Joel R. Boot	Ministers	Marvin J. Vander Vliet
	Richard H. Verkaik		Larry J. Doornbos
Elders	Gordon J. DeKruyter	Elders	Philip W. Timmer
	Raymond D. Dennis		Lawrence Vredevoogd

Grand Rapids East
Ministers	Roger A. Kok	Ministers	Gerald L. Zandstra
	Mark D. Vermaire		Fred M. Bultman
Elders	David E. Holwerda	Elders	E. Dick Flietstra
	Mel De Stigter		George Monsma

Grand Rapids North
Ministers	Roger B. Groenboom	Ministers	Jeffrey M. Meyer
	Roger J. Visker		Case G. Van Wyk
Elders	Jack M. De Korne	Elders	Donald F. Oosterhouse
	Harvey Kingma		John Byma, Sr.

Grand Rapids South
Ministers	Stanley Mast	Ministers	Thomas B. Swieringa
	Reginald Smith		George R. Mossel
Elders	John Knight	Elders	Jack Elenbaas
	Nelson E. Haan		Bernard L. Scholten

Grandville
Ministers	Thomas K. Groelsema	Ministers	Douglas A. Kamstra
	Dale L. Slings		Arthur L. Van Whye
Elders	James H. Boersma	Elders	Larry D. Groothuis
	Michael J. Van Laan		————

Greater Los Angeles
Ministers	Elmer M. Tandayu	Ministers	John Van Schepen
	Andrew Vanden Akker		Dale W. Vander Veen
Elders	Kenneth P. Stoub	Elders	Gordon Bakker
	Peter C. Tong		————

Classis	Delegates		Alternates	
Hackensack				
	Ministers	Kenneth J. Vander Wall	Ministers	Paul R. De Vries
		Thomas G. Klaasen		Ezequiel N. Romero
	Elders...............	Edwin R. Arevalo	Elders...............	Kevin H. Miller
		Hernan M. Zapata-Lopez		Case Van Staalduinen
Hamilton				
	Ministers	Jacob (Jack) Kerkhof	Ministers	John Postuma
		Bernard H. De Jonge		H. Ray Vander Kooij
	Elders...............	Arthur Joosse	Elders...............	Martin O. Kloet
		Bruce Dykstra		Arnold J. Eising
Heartland				
	Ministers	Richard R. De Vries	Ministers	Duane E. Tinklenberg
		Jack M. Gray		Carl J. Klompien
	Elders...............	Marion D. Van Soelen	Elders...............	Hubert W. Schuller
		Allan J. Kramer		Don Vermeer
Holland				
	Ministers	Douglas R. Fauble	Ministers	James H. Scholten
		Wayne A. Brouwer		Michael De Vries
	Elders...............	David Altena	Elders...............	Donald G. Zwagerman
		Ronald G. Koetsier		Sander De Haan
Hudson				
	Ministers	John G. Keizer	Ministers	Paul M. Ingeneri
		John J. Hoogland		David D. Poolman
	Elders...............	Henry Bakker	Elders...............	————
		Paul C. Szto		————
Huron				
	Ministers	Ralph Koops	Ministers	Ed Den Haan
		Kevin P. De Raaf		Shawn R. Brix
	Elders...............	John A. Mohle	Elders...............	Ralph Van Dalen
		Ed Benjamins		James Visser
Iakota				
	Ministers	Jerry D. Buwalda	Ministers	Roger W. Sparks
		Charles J. De Ridder		Robert D. Drenten
	Elders...............	Martin Dekkenga	Elders...............	John E. Mosterd
		Lane Bonnema		Lyle Schipper
Illiana				
	Ministers	Gerald E. De Vries	Ministers	Robert D. Zomermaand
		Ildefonso Torres		Thomas J. Kok
	Elders...............	John Faber	Elders...............	————
		John A. De Kock		————
Kalamazoo				
	Ministers	Joseph A. Brinks	Ministers	Philip J. Boender
		Stephan R. Van Eck		Albert J. De Vries
	Elders...............	Nelson J. Gritter	Elders...............	John Vanderbilt
		Leonard D. Klok		————
Lake Erie				
	Ministers	Peter J. De Vries	Ministers	Paul W. Brink
		George F. Vander Weit		Timothy L. Koster
	Elders...............	Wesley D. Van Houten	Elders...............	————
		————		————

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Superior		
	Ministers ....Alfred J. Van Dellen	Ministers ....William H. Kooienga
	James C. Dekker	William Versteeg
	Elders...............Wesley D. Postma	Elders...............Will G. De Boer
	David J. Swinney	Neil H. Lettinga
Minnkota		
	Ministers ....LeRoy G. Christoffels	Ministers ....David E. Den Haan
	Timothy J. Brown	Thomas H. Vander Ziel
	Elders...............Peter A. Walhof	Elders...............Verl Hieb
	Peter H. Vander Lugt	————
Muskegon		
	Ministers ....Richard T. Vanderwal	Ministers ....Larry D. Baar
	Edward J. Tamminga	Robert L. Bierenga
	Elders...............Gerald L. Meyers	Elders...............Herbert Boelens
	Peter Van Meurs	Paul H. Vruwink
Niagara		
	Ministers ....Jack Van Marion	Ministers ....Richard J. de Lange
	Peter Slofstra	Henry Vander Beek
	Elders...............Peter J. Vermeer	Elders...............Harry Van Tuyl
	John Koornneef	Leo Van Tuyl
Northcentral Iowa		
	Ministers ....David A. Zylstra	Ministers ....David J. Dykstra
	Jack Vanden Heuvel	Thomas J. Niehof
	Elders...............Gary W. Nibbelink	Elders...............————
	Elmer J. Riebkes	————
Northern Illinois		
	Ministers ....Timothy H. Douma	Ministers ....Lambert J. Sikkema
	Lee A. Koning	Bert De Jong
	Elders...............Arnie Stolte	Elders...............————
	Frank E. De Boer	————
Northern Michigan		
	Ministers ....James M. Evenhouse	Ministers ....Peter R. Byma
	David J. Weemhoff	Duane J. Timmermans
	Elders...............Vernon Vande Pol	Elders...............Bernard Mulder
	Theodore A. Heuker	Brad J. Gernaat
Pacific Hanmi		
	Ministers ....In Chul Kim	Ministers ....Chong D. Yoon
	Seung J. Kang	Chung C. Cho
	Elders...............Hyung J. Park	Elders...............Young S. Kim
	David Yang	Bong J. Chung
Pacific Northwest		
	Ministers ....Henry Numan	Ministers ....Samuel Y. Sung
	Richard J. De Ruiter	James C. Wiersum
	Elders...............D. Lee Barclay	Elders...............Herm Fransen
	Richard Eigenbrood	Jay A. Anema
Pella		
	Ministers ....Ronald L. Bouwkamp	Ministers ....John R. Sittema
	William D. Zeilstra	Kenneth L. Schepel
	Elders...............Henry J. Vande Voort	Elders...............Carl F. Nunnikhoven
	David D. Postema	Kenneth E. Slagter

Classis	Delegates	Alternates

Quinte
	Ministers ....Norman A. Sennema	Ministers ....Ed W. Visser
	B. Bernard Bakker	Henry Wildeboer
	Elders...............John Schievink	Elders...............Al Veltman
	Marten H. Van Harmelen	Hank A. Nieuwstraten

Red Mesa
	Ministers ....Anthony Begay	Ministers ....Gerry G. Van Dam
	Raymond Slim	John W. Dykhuis
	Elders...............Notah Benally	Elders...............Bobby L. Boyd
	Leonard Arviso	John P. Kostelyk

Rocky Mountain
	Ministers ....Thomas D. Draayer	Ministers ....Robert L. Westenbroek
	Elias D. Burgos	Thomas E. Dykman
	Elders...............Richard M. Schemper	Elders...............Gary R. Price
	Kyu S. Paek	————

Southeast U.S.
	Ministers ....German Moreno	Ministers ....James A. Vander Slik
	Mark A. Davies	Robert E. Van Hofwegen
	Elders...............Roy C. Vander Klok	Elders...............————
	Dan H. Vander Laan	————

Thornapple Valley
	Ministers ....William J. Renkema	Ministers ....Timothy E. Van Zalen
	Norman L. Meyer	Ben J. Ridder
	Elders...............Uko Zylstra	Elders...............John G. De Vries
	Dale G. Wolters	Ralph J. Cok

Toronto
	Ministers ....Howard McPhee	Ministers ....H. Richard Nanninga
	Samuel Cooper	Hendrik P. Bruinsma
	Elders...............George Vandervelde	Elders...............Enno J. Meijers
	Louis Bierling	Leo Visser

Wisconsin
	Ministers ....Daniel J. Roeda	Ministers ....Peter T. Verhulst
	Larry E. Van Essen	Clifford E. Bajema
	Elders...............Peter Bosscher	Elders...............Bill Vander Zouwen
	Corwin Vander Ark	Bruce L. Rottman

Yellowstone
	Ministers ....Gary G. Hofland	Ministers ....John Wanders
	Jacob C. Weeda	John W. Van Der Heide
	Elders...............Joel P. Kramer	Elders...............Wes C. Kamerman
	Leon H. Smit	————

Zeeland
	Ministers ....Gerrit P. Veenstra	Ministers ....Harlan G. Vanden Einde
	Steven R. Sytsma	Jerry L. Alferink
	Elders...............Harry J. Mulder	Elders...............David C. Jeurink
	Gerald Haveman	Blaine Sessions

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Joint-Ministries Management Committee
  Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation
  Christian Reformed Church in North America—Ontario Corporation
  Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 1998 and Synod 1999.

I. Introduction

A. General

The governing Board of the Christian Reformed Church is organized as two legal entities, one in Michigan and one in Ontario. Together these legal entities form the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) and are known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The mandate given by synod to the Board is found in its constitution and bylaws, which received final approval at Synod 1996 (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 620-33).

The Board has met three times since Synod 1998 (September, December, February) and is scheduled to meet again in May. At its meetings the Board divides into two standing committees (Polity Committee and Program and Finance Committee) for consideration of agenda material. The Polity Committee considers matters which formerly were assigned to the Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) as well as the work associated with the office of the general secretary. The Program and Finance Committee deals with matters which arise out of the ministries of the agencies and the work associated with the office of the executive director of ministries.

The executive committee of the Board meets as needed. Canadian trustees meet separately to consider Canadian issues. This arrangement complies with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities and provides a helpful way to consider and recommend solutions to issues unique to the Canadian churches.

Though the Board deals with many ecclesiastical matters as well as required corporate issues, a central focus of its work is to enhance the ministries of the whole church, especially those which are carried on through the agencies of the CRC. It is a privilege to see how many wonderful ministries the Lord is pleased to accomplish through the membership and organizations of the CRC. The work of education, relief and development, radio and TV, care and compassion, and missions at home and abroad has been blessed by God.

The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the whole church in these challenging times.

B. Membership

The members of the Michigan Corporation are Rev. Raymond Slim (Far West U.S. I); Dr. Tom Van Groningen (Far West U.S. II); Rev. Aldon L. Kuiper and Mr. Harold Van Maanen (Great Plains); Mr. William Weidenaar (Central U.S. I); Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen (Central U.S. II); Rev. John P. Gorter and Mr. Howard Johnson (Central U.S. III); Mrs. Kathleen Smith and Rev. Duane K. Kelderman (Central U.S. IV); Rev. Stanley J. Workman (Eastern U.S.); Dr. Carol Rottman and Mrs. Mamie Thomas (members-at-large).

The members of the Ontario Corporation are Rev. Jake Kuipers (Eastern Canada I); Rev. Gordon H. Pols and Mr. J. Hans Vander Stoep (Eastern Canada II); Rev. Peter Brouwer and Dr. William H. Vanden Born (Western Canada); Mr. William Wildeboer (member-at-large).

The general secretary (Dr. David H. Engelhard) and the executive director of ministries (Dr. Peter Borgdorff) serve ex officio as corporate trustees and members of the Board of Trustees.

1. Board officers: Mr. W. Weidenaar, president; Rev. J. Kuipers, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, secretary; Mrs. K. Smith, treasurer.

2. Corporation officers: Mr. W. Weidenaar, president; Rev. J. Kuipers, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. P. Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Mrs. K. Smith, treasurer; Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance and administration.

3. Polity Committee: Rev. P. Brouwer, Rev. J.P. Gorter, Rev. A.L. Hoksbergen, Rev. A.L. Kuiper, Rev. G.H. Pols, Dr. C. Rottman, Rev. R. Slim, Mr. W. Wildeboer, Rev. S.J. Workman, and Dr. D.H. Engelhard (adviser).

4. Program and Finance Committee: Mr. H. Johnson, Rev. D.K. Kelderman, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mrs. K. Smith, Mrs. M. Thomas, Mr. W.H. Vanden Born, Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep, Dr. T. Van Groningen, Mr. H. Van Maanen, Mr. W. Weidenaar, and Dr. P. Borgdorff (adviser).

5. Executive Committee: Mr. W. Weidenaar, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mrs. K. Smith, Mr. H. Johnson, Mr. W. Wildeboer. Dr. D.H. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff serve ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
19	1	3rd quartile
18	3	2nd and 3rd quartile

Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

D. Interim appointments

1. Board appointments

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Grandville		Rev. A.J. Schoonveld	
	Minnkota		Rev. L.J. Christoffels	
	Muskegon	Rev. A.L. Hoksbergen	Rev. R.L. Bierenga	2001
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. S.J. Kang	Rev. S.W. Yoon	2001
CRC Publications	Arizona		Mr. P. Kuczynski	
	Greater L.A.		Ms. J. Beezhold	
	Illiana	Mr. R. Wunderink	Rev. M.J. Jonkman	2001
	Pella	Mrs. G. Nieuwsma	Mr. E. Vande Pol	2001
	Toronto	Mrs. H. Roukema	Mrs. I. Simpson	2001
	Yellowstone		Mr. T. Horner	
Home Missions	Arizona		Rev. J.A. Dykema	
	Greater L.A.		Ms. R. Van Dyk	
	Northern Michigan		Rev. P.R. Byma	
World Missions	Hackensack	Rev. T.G. Klassen		2001
	Hudson		Rev. J.C. Fisher	
	Iakota		Rev. S. Scripps	
	Wisconsin		Mr. R. Kok	
	Zeeland		Rev. R.J. Meyer	
CRWRC	Arizona		Mr. W. Rosema	
	Hackensack		Mr. C. Mast	
	Illiana		Mr. D. Lyzenga	

2. Calvin Theological Seminary

a. Far West U.S. I

The Board approved the appointment of Rev. Daniel Brink, pastor of Rosewood CRC, Bellflower, California, as alternate to Rev. Alfred Lindemulder. Rev. Donald Klompeen resigned as board member, and Rev. A. Lindemulder replaced him as member.

b. Great Plains

The Board appointed Rev. William Zeilstra, pastor of Second CRC, Pella, Iowa, as alternate to Rev. Roger Kramer. Dr. Dean Deppe

(appointed to Calvin Theological Seminary faculty) resigned, and Rev. R. Kramer replaced him as member.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Proposed changes in Church Order Article 38-f (cf. *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 379)

   Synod 1998 proposed that Church Order Article 38-f be added to the Church Order and read as follows:

   f. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may unite to form union congregations with one or more particular congregations of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, with the approval of classis.

   According to the regulations of Church Order Supplement, Article 47, this proposed change must be adopted by a following synod before it is implemented. Although changes in the Church Order supplements do not need approval by a following synod, synod should know that Church Order Supplement, Article 38-f has been approved to regulate the formation of union churches.

2. Deletion of Church Order Supplement, Article 44-b

   Church Order Supplement, Article 44-b, approved by Synod 1967, contains the mandate and regulations for the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC). The CCRCC has voted to disband now that the Canadian Ministries Board has been convened and has assumed responsibility for the ministries previously under the jurisdiction of the CCRCC.

   The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA recommends to synod that Church Order Supplement, Article 44-b be deleted.

   Ground: The establishing and convening of the Canadian Ministries Board has led to the disbanding of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, and the supplement is no longer needed as the mandate and regulative document for the CCRCC.

   Note: The deletion mentioned above was recommended to Synod 1998, but because of an oversight it was never acted upon.

3. Classes which have declared the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a

   In accordance with the instructions of Synod 1995, the general secretary keeps a list of those classes which declare the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, the following classes have adopted a decision to declare the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North	Kalamazoo
British Columbia South-East	Lake Erie
Chicago South	Muskegon
Florida	Northern Illinois

<table>
<tr><td>Grand Rapids East</td><td>Pacific Northwest</td></tr>
<tr><td>Greater Los Angeles</td><td>Quinte</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hackensack</td><td>Red Mesa</td></tr>
<tr><td>Holland</td><td>Rocky Mountain</td></tr>
<tr><td>Huron</td><td>Toronto</td></tr>
</table>

4. Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC

The Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC was appointed by Synod 1996. Normally a committee is given three years to complete its work. This committee, however, was unable to complete its work and has asked for a one-year extension. The Board has heard the committee's request and on behalf of synod has granted a one-year extension. It is expected that this study committee's report will be ready for Synod 2000.

5. Committee on Continuing Professional Development

The Committee on Continuing Professional Development was given a one-year mandate by Synod 1998 (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 428). The committee held its first meeting in late October and has been unable to complete its work for Synod 1999. The committee expects to submit its report to the churches in November 1999 for action at Synod 2000.

6. Multiethnic Strategies Committee

Synod 1998 appointed the Multiethnic Strategies Committee (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 408, 444). Following synod, those appointed were informed and invited to serve. Not all the appointees were able to serve, and so the alternates were invited to become part of the committee. In addition, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA—Ontario Corporation was requested to appoint a Native North American to the committee, and it did so in December.

The Multiethnic Strategies Committee is made up of the following persons:

African North American	Mr. James Mutoigo and Rev. Reginald Smith
Asian North American	Mr. Bing Goei and Mr. Hyung Kim
European North American	Mrs. Kathleen Smith and Rev. Frederick Witteveen
Hispanic North American	Rev. Pedro Aviles and Rev. Dante Venegas
Native North American	Mr. Duane Chimoni and Mr. Harold Roscher
Ex officio:	Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary
	Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries
	Dr. Duane Kelderman, member of Board of Trustees

7. Ethnic advisers to synod

The position of ethnic adviser was approved by Synod 1995 and first filled at Synod 1996. Guidelines for the position were approved by Synod 1996 and incorporated into the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

The Board appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to Synod 1999:

Rev. Pedro Aviles, pastor of Grace and Peace CRC, Chicago, Illinois
Evangelist Khay Baccam, evangelist for Faith CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa
Rev. George Boyd, pastor of Christ Community CRC, Atlanta, Georgia
Mr. James Mutoigo, lawyer at Lakeshore Law Chambers, Burlington, Ontario

Mr. Harold Roscher, student at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alberta
Dr. Jai Shim, teacher at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Rev. Kinfun Wong, pastor of Friendship Agape CRC, San Jose, California

8. Board nominations

a. Regional members

Whenever a new board member is needed from a region or when a member's first term is completed, each classis in the region is requested to submit or approve names for the position. Once a slate has been prepared by the Board, the nominations are returned to the classes for voting when persons are running for first terms; names are submitted to synod for election when persons are running for second terms (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, D, 2).

The following slate of names has been sent to the classes of the *Eastern Canada I* region (Classes Chatham, Huron, Niagara) for election:

Rev. Edward Den Haan, a member of First CRC, Guelph, Ontario, is campus minister, University of Guelph. Before becoming campus minister in 1977, he served Charlottetown, PEI, CRC and Maranatha CRC, Calgary, Alberta. He serves as chairperson of the executive board for the Institute for Christian Studies. Rev. Den Haan served on the 1994 search committee for general secretary. He has served on the World Missions Board, the Calvin College Board of Trustees, the CRC synodical Committee on Youth Ministry, and is presently an alternate on the Board of Trustees.

Rev. Jerry J. Hoytema is pastor of Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ontario. He presently serves on the classical interim committee and classical home-missions committee. He has served on the Judicial Code Study Committee, the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary, and The Back to God Hour Board.

The following slates of nominees for second terms are presented to synod for its action:

Far West U.S. I

Rev. Raymond Slim (member) is pastor of Sanostee, Naschitti, and Toadlena/Newcomb, New Mexico, CRCs. He attended Reformed Bible College and is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary. His professional training also includes civil drafting.

Rev. Dale W. Vander Veen (alternate) is pastor of Bethany CRC, Bellflower, California. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He presently serves as regional pastor for Classis Greater Los Angeles.

Far West U.S. II

Dr. Tom Van Groningen (member) is a consultant with community colleges statewide and formerly served as a college administrator. He has a doctorate in education and has served as superintendent, president, and chancellor of several institutions. He is a member of Modesto CRC, Modesto, California.

Mrs. Priscilla Medema (alternate) is a member of Everett CRC, Everett, Washington. She is retired, having previously owned a small business

operated from her home. She has been involved in Coffee Break for over twenty years.

Great Plains

  Mr. Harold Van Maanen (member) is recently retired as speaker pro tem of the Iowa House of Representatives, where he served for twenty years. He is a member of Calvary CRC, Pella, Iowa, where he is active in the Care Shepherd program. Mr. Van Maanen has been a delegate to synod three times.

  Mrs. Brenda Ackerman (alternate) is a member of Unity CRC, Ames, Iowa. She is a homemaker and is self-employed as a seamstress. She was educated at Iowa State University. She has served on boards for Iowa State University and on various Ames community boards.

Central U.S. IV

  Rev. Duane Kelderman (member) is copastor of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He serves on the Multiethnic Strategies Committee and on the CRC Worship Committee. He serves part-time as a preaching instructor at Calvin Theological Seminary.

  Rev. Henry Admiraal (alternate) is pastor of Westend CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He presently serves as chair of the classical interim committee. He has served on the CRC Worship Committee and on various classical committees.

Eastern U.S.

  Rev. Stanley J. Workman (member) is pastor of Oasis Community CRC, Orlando, Florida. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the boards of Home Missions and World Missions. He has also served on ministerial-association boards, on the Community Mental Health Board in Orlando, and on various classical committees.

  Dr. Brent A. Averill (alternate) is pastor of New Covenant CRC, Hampton, New Hampshire. He is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and has a D.Min. from Westminster Theological Seminary and an M.A. in counseling from Gordon-Conwell. He served on the Synodical Interim Committee (now BOT) from 1987 to 1990. He has also served on the Board of Home Missions and on various classical committees.

b. At-large members

  At-large members for the Board (total of three) are chosen directly by synod. This year Mr. William Wildeboer completes his second term and is not eligible for reelection. At-large positions exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board. This year the Board presents the following names:

  Mrs. Sarah Cook is a member of Calvary CRC, Ottawa, Ontario, where she serves as deacon. She serves as program manager with the Ottawa Center for Research and Innovation in Ottawa. She attended Trinity Christian College for two years and furthered her studies for three years in the Netherlands in youth work. She is a member of various professional organizations. She previously served on the Judicial Code Committee, the synodical Committee on Headship in the Bible, and on the CRC Publications Board. She has also served on both

the elementary and high school Christian-school boards in Ottawa.

Mrs. Martha Kouwenhoven is a member of All Nations CRC, Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she presently serves as elder. She and her husband have lived in several places in Canada, including Vancouver, Edmonton, and Toronto, and she is familiar with the work of the churches and ministry needs throughout Canada. She previously served on the Interchurch Relations Committee for the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada and in various capacities within the local church, including Coffee Break and Calvinettes.

9. Judicial Code Committee nominations

The Judicial Code Committee has not met since Synod 1998 and has no recommendations for Synod 1999's consideration. Three members of the committee, however, are completing terms of service. Rev. John Van Ryn and Mr. Wietse Posthumus are completing their second terms of service and are not eligible for reelection. Mr. Richard Bouma is completing his first term and is eligible for reelection. We thank these men for the contribution they have made to the life of our churches.

According to the rules of synod, Mr. Richard L. Bouma is presented for reelection as a single nomination.

Mr. Richard L. Bouma, attorney and partner in the Warner, Norcross, and Judd, LLP law firm, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC. He is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Michigan Law School. He is a member of the State Bar of Michigan Health Law Section, the American Bar Association Health Law Forum, and other professional organizations.

To fill the positions of Mr. Wietse Posthumus and Rev. John Van Ryn, the following names are presented:

Mr. Edward John Vander Kloet, a member of Waterloo Christian Reformed Church, Waterloo, Ontario, works for the law firm of Giffen Lee. He graduated from Calvin College with a B.A. degree, and he received his law degree from the University of Western Ontario Law School. In his legal work he has represented persons engaged in legal disputes with their churches and has provided advice to churches which anticipate disputes with their employees.

Mr. Mark A. Huyser-Wierenga, a member of Fellowship CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, is a crown prosecutor for the Department of Justice for the government of Alberta. He received his B.A. degree from Calvin College and his law degree from the University of Alberta. He has served on the board of directors of several inner-city organizations providing services to those in need and presently serves on the council of his church.

Rev. Emmett Harrison is pastor of Eastside Christian Reformed Church, Cleveland, Ohio. While in Chicago, he was in the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE). He presently serves on the CR Home Missions executive board and as president of the Urban Missions Board. He also serves on the synodical Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC and on the committee for "Classis for the 21ˢᵗ Century." He has served as an ethnic adviser to synod and as a delegate to Synod 1997.

Rev. Dante Venegas is a member of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, where he served as copastor for eighteen years. He is now pastor of City Hope CRC, a new Home Missions church plant. For the past two and one-half years he served as director of chaplaincy services at Alternative Directions (a corrections center in Grand Rapids for male offenders) and now continues to serve there on a volunteer basis. He presently serves on the Reformed Bible College Board, the steering committee for the Grand Rapids Marriage Policy Committee, the Madison Square Redevelopment Corporation for the city of Grand Rapids, and on the Home Repair Services fund drive. He has served as an ethnic adviser to synod and on the search committee for a director for World Missions.

10. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, serves as a denominational directory and as a resource for statistical information. In addition to information about classes, congregations, ministers, and agencies, it contains a historical sketch of the life of the church during the previous year and provides obituary information about pastors who died during that year.

Each year the *Yearbook* is published with greater facility than the year before because of technological refinements. The earlier deadline for *Yearbook* information was observed again this year so that the book could be published in January rather than in the spring, as in prior years. Thus the book reflects denominational and local-church information at a given point (August 31) in the calendar year. The change in date of publication continues to meet with favorable response.

The statistics printed beneath the congregational information in the 1999 *Yearbook* in each instance show the total number of souls (baptized and professing members) in a local congregation. By instruction of synod the following membership totals are listed on the Classical Information pages: number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and total number of members.

The Directory of Churches and Ministries in the *Yearbook* includes organized churches, emerging churches, newly planted churches (not yet having statistics), and other ministries, for a total of 972 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was very good this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 857 ministries.

We acknowledge with gratitude the excellent services of Mrs. Charlene Ezinga, *Yearbook* manager, and Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse, Mrs. Nancy Haynes, and Mrs. Alice Damsteegt, who assisted in gathering information, entering it into the database, copy reading, editing, and carefully attending to the myriad of details involved in publishing the *Yearbook*. The same hearty gratitude needs to be expressed to our computer staff—Mr. Jim Jonker, Mrs. Shirley De Vries, and Mr. Matt Winkle—who diligently provide the necessary support services for this exacting task.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was printed, incorporating the changes adopted and ratified by Synod 1998. These booklets are updated by the general secretary and reprinted annually, when necessary, and a copy is sent to each church.

c. *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the general secretary. This would not be accomplished by established deadlines without the invaluable assistance of his secretary, Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse, Mrs. Jan Walhout (copy editor), Mrs. Nancy Haynes, and personnel from CRC Product Services.

As in previous years, some decisions needed to be made about which material properly belonged in the *Agenda for Synod.* Erring on the side of grace seemed more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether the material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church*

During the past year the Board of Trustees has again sent to all CRC councils updated materials for the *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church: Your Church in Action.* Several councils ordered new notebooks because the old ones had been lost or misplaced. This large blue notebook should be kept available in every council room.

The *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church* contains the following sections:

1) Ministry Shares and Offerings—This section of the booklet contains financial data and a description of the programs carried on by all CRC boards and agencies as well as by accredited outside agencies. It gives assistance for scheduling special offerings and suggests announcements to be made prior to receiving such offerings.

2) Denominational Insights—After a brief statement on the nature of the church and on some of the principles of Reformed church government, this section provides information about the nature of our assemblies, the function of major assemblies, the agenda for synod, and the denominational program structure.

3) Congregational Helps—This section contains helps which are available for councils and congregations; suggested rules of procedure and model agendas for council, consistory, and deacons meetings; suggestions for congregational committees; helpful information on the use of members' gifts; and other useful information.

4) Ministers' Compensation Survey—By mandate of synod, a survey of ministers' compensation has been prepared each year for use by our pastors and by finance committees of the church councils. The 1999 survey will be presented to Synod 1999 and later mailed to the churches for inclusion in the *Handbook*. It is intended to be a helpful guide in the setting of salaries and other position-related reimbursements. Because the survey is also used by our pension committees, Synod 1988 passed the following recommendation:

> That synod remind the churches that Synod 1982 adopted a recommendation to "require that all ministers complete the salary questionnaire annually to enable the pension committees to accurately calculate the average cash salary as a base for computing ministers' pensions."
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 51; *Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 574)

5) Doctrinal and Ethical Decisions—This section is indispensable for all who wish to know the position of the CRC on various matters of doctrine and ethics. It is in the process of being updated.

e. *Index of Synodical Decisions*

Previous editions of the *Index of Synodical Decisions* have been valuable aids for those who need to research the decisions of synodical assemblies. The most recent edition of the index was published in 1980. The updating of the index was mandated by Synod 1995. Since that time the staff has been working steadily on this project but with limited time and resources to devote to it. The previously published index needed to be redone in a completely different software system; the indexing standards and practices needed rethinking and, in many instances, needed altering; and *Agenda* and *Acts* of subsequent years needed to be seamlessly inserted into the older index. The index is now scheduled to be published in A.D. 2000 and to include materials through Synod 2000. Those needing access to the index for research purposes may contact the general secretary, who will assist them in obtaining what they need.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual, originally prepared by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, was revised this year by the general secretary and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the general secretary.

B. *Legal/corporate matters*

The Christian Reformed Church continues to be a defendant in a lawsuit filed against our former third-party insurance administrator. This matter has been slowly winding its way through the courts for several years, and it does not appear that it will be settled anytime soon. If synod wishes to know the details and circumstances surrounding this lawsuit, it can best be discussed in executive session.

It has been widely reported that the CRC agencies involved in the IRM matter joined other investors in filing a petition with the court requesting the appointment of an independent trustee to manage the IRM Corporation. When the court-sanctioned creditors committee reached the same position and then proceeded to appoint new management with the approval of the bankruptcy court, the petition previously filed was withdrawn. At the time of this writing, no legal action involving the agencies of the church with reference to IRM is pending. Neither is further legal action anticipated, though all future possibilities can't really be ruled out in a case as complex as the IRM difficulties have proved to be.

The resolution of the IRM Corporation's bankruptcy proceeding continues to move slowly. The creditors committee is attempting to find solutions that

will be fair to all the investors. The difficulty is that there are competing interests at work, and what is desirable for one class of investors may not be in the best interest of another class of investors. It remains to be seen whether these competing interests can be resolved. Further information may be available at the time of synod's meeting.

C. Program matters

The reports of agencies and institutions speak for themselves. The term *agencies* refers to The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, CRWRC, the CRC Loan Fund, the Fund for Smaller Churches, Home Missions, Pastoral Ministries, and World Missions. The term *institutions* refers to Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Increasingly, the agencies and institutions collaborate so that the ministries of the CRC can be coordinated and complementary. That observation is not intended to deny that cooperation and collaboration can be difficult. The long independent histories of these organizations, the strong commitment to an agency's mandate, and the influence of a worldwide missionary community are all forces that can dominate the effort to cooperate and unify. The Board of Trustees continually monitors these various forces in the hope of achieving what synod has mandated in years past.

The Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC), a group composed of agency directors, institution presidents, the general secretary, the director of finance and administration, the director of personnel, and the executive director of ministries as chairperson, is the primary administrative group charged with the responsibility of coordinating the various ministries. MCC recommendations are forwarded to the Board of Trustees for approval as needed.

1. Pastoral Ministries

Of all the agencies, Pastoral Ministries has had the most difficult year. Ms. Beth Swagman resigned her position as executive director effective July 1, 1998. The executive director of ministries has been filling this function on an interim basis since that time. The staffing of this agency was further complicated by the untimely departure in early 1999 of Rev. Alfred Luke, director of Race Relations. The Pastoral Ministries Board has been assessing the organizational needs of the agency as well as the state of race relations in the CRC. The board is scheduled to make recommendations concerning such matters at its meeting scheduled for April 1999. In preparation for recommendations concerning race relations, focus groups are being held in seven locations throughout the denomination during March 1999. It is expected that synod will receive a supplementary report concerning Pastoral Ministries at the time of synod's meeting.

2. Fund for Smaller Churches task force

The Board of Trustees commissioned a task force to address continuing concerns about the effectiveness of the Fund for Smaller Churches. This task force was convened at the request of the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee and in cooperation with Home Missions. The report of the task force is appended in Appendix A of this report. The Board of Trustees recommends synod's approval of the recommendations contained in Appendix A with two amendments that, the Board believes, make the proposals more acceptable. First, the Board recommends that the (implied) commitments of Synod 1995 be honored so that any recipient church during

the transition period will not receive less than the amount that church would have received under the 1995 formula. This recommendation applies only to churches that were receiving assistance at the time of the 1995 decision. Second, the Board recommends that synod permit an exception clause for churches that may be classified as "heritage" congregations. Essentially, this classification would apply to congregations that, for historical or other specified circumstances, ought to be maintained regardless of other criteria that may be applied. Such other circumstances include geographical isolation, high-need communities, or other unusual circumstances that can be demonstrated to be exceptional.

3. Denominational mailing list

The Board approved and now recommends to synod a revised policy for the use of the denominational mailing list. The revised policy is appended as Appendix B of this report. The Board recommends that synod approve the policy as proposed.

4. Board of Trustees evaluation

Synod 1998 requested that the Board of Trustees engage in an evaluation of Board performance. Immediately following synod, an evaluation committee was appointed. That committee presented its evaluation report to the December meeting of the BOT; a copy of the report is found in Appendix C of this report. At its meeting in February 1999, the Board of Trustees adopted a response to the evaluation and passes that on to synod for its review (see Appendix D).

5. Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Policy

The Board also adopted and has since implemented a conflict-of-interest policy that is to be used by all the agencies and institutions as well as the Board itself. The policy statement is attached in Appendix E of this report, and the Board recommends that synod receive this as information.

6. Social justice and hunger action

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action continues to give leadership in the crucial issues of our time. The atrocities in Sierra Leone, the instability throughout West Africa, and the issues of poverty worldwide continue to command the attention of this office. In addition, in cooperation with the agencies and institutions, this office also gives leadership to the "Church in Society" portion of the denominational ministries plan. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, assisted by Rev. Duane VanderBrug and Mr. John De Jager, have done excellent work in facilitating and encouraging the follow-up on the entire ministry plan of the agencies and institutions of the CRC.

7. U.S. Structure Committee report

The Board of Trustees is in the process of carefully reviewing the recommendations of the U.S. Structure Committee, whose report is before the churches. The Board has decided that its formal response will be included in its supplementary report to synod.

8. Agency presentations at synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at synod. Synod also decided to recognize at its Prayer and Praise Service the presence of missionaries, chaplains, and all others engaged in ministries

in specialized settings. At its meeting on May 5, 1998, the Ontario Corporation Board requested that arrangements be made for the Canadian ministries director (CMD), Mr. Ray Elgersma, to address Synod 1999 about his work and the new structure for ministry in Canada. The following roster for agency presentations and a presentation from the CMD is proposed for Synod 1999 on a schedule of synod's choosing:

- CRC Publications
- Home Missions
- Mr. Ray Elgersma, Canadian ministries director

9. Canadian Ministries Board

At the time this report is being written, the Canadian Ministries Board has been operating for just over one year. This classically representative board is made up of one-third pastors, one-third elders, and one-third deacons, with three additional members-at-large. This past year has been a formative year for the board and its new structure. Board members have spent time getting to know each other and learning to work effectively as a team as well as initiating significant change in the way Canadian ministries operate to ensure more collaboration across agency lines. If there is one word that captures the essence of the new Canadian structure, approved by Synod 1997, it is *ministry*. Staff and board members are focusing on stream-lining the organizational structure to make ministry more effective, both globally and locally.

Mr. Ray Elgersma, former director of CRWRC of Canada, started his work as the first Canadian ministries director in July 1998. At that time Rev. Arie Van Eek, executive secretary of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC), retired, and the ministries of the CCRCC began to be folded into the new Canadian structure. The Canadian ministries director's mandate is to

- Integrate the ministries of the former CCRCC into the fabric of the denomination and its agencies.
- Empower the agencies of the denomination to work in a more cooper-ative and collaborative fashion as they plan and implement ministry activities and support local church communities.
- Act as the ecumenical officer in Canada, representing the CRC in bodies like the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and relating to staff in other denominations.
- Develop stronger linkages between local churches and denomina-tional agencies.

a. Changes implemented and other activities in 1998-1999
   1) Ministries of the CCRCC
      a) The CCRCC's National Committee for Native Ministries no longer exists. Staff now have administrative accountability to the Canadian ministries director. Local councils in each of the centers in Regina, Edmonton, and Winnipeg are being put into place. These councils will have primarily aboriginal Christian represen-tatives in addition to representation from local home-missions committees and diaconal conferences.

b) The CCRCC's Consultative Committee on Task Forces (CCTF) has been terminated. The CRC continues to participate in the five coalitions of which it is a member, but these coalitions are now linked to the denomination through various agency staff members whose work is related to the mandate of one coalition or another.

c) The CCRCC's Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) continues to work on the end-of-life paper for Synod 2000. The Canadian Ministries Board is working with the CCG to review its mandate, particularly in light of the Race Relations Committee of the former CCRCC and the newly formed Church in Society Committee, a binational committee of the CRC.

d) The Canadian Ministries Board continues to discuss whether the Electronic Media Committee (EMC), formerly a CCRCC committee, should continue as a committee of The Back to God Hour Canada board or be integrated into that board.

2) Increased cooperation and collaboration

a) The Chaplain Committee-Canada had its last meeting in February 1999. In its place is a Pastoral Ministries-Canada Board. Three members of the former Chaplain Committee will sit on the new Pastoral Ministries-Canada Board.

b) The Canadian Ministries Board has three standing committees and three ministry teams, based on the following ministry divisions: international, domestic, and church development. The committees and teams are all committed to collaborative planning for any ministry in which the CRC is engaged.

c) The Canadian Ministries Board continues to advance joint communications by the agencies of the CRC. An example of this effort was the devotional brochure entitled *Free to Pray,* which was a joint publication of Canadian CRC agencies.

3) Ecumenical relations

a) The Canadian Ministries Board has made additional appointments to its Interchurch Relations Committee. Through these appointments, the board hopes to achieve greater diversity on that committee. The Interchurch Relations Committee is currently in dialogue with the Canadian Synod of the Reformed Church in America regarding past hurts and a vision for future collaboration.

b) The Canadian Ministries Board has made a new appointment to the Canadian Council of Churches.

4) Greater linkage to the local church

It is the belief of the Canadian Ministries Board that the primary responsibility for ministry is with the local congregation. When the local church desires to do ministry beyond the local context, responsibility for ministry is then delegated to the agencies. It is the hope of the Canadian Ministries Board that what it is doing is supportive of and responsive to the needs and desires of local churches. To that end, CRC agency staff members are viewed as resources to the local church to provide speakers, printed materials, videos, consultation, training, support for local ministry activities, and so forth. The agencies that report to the Canadian Ministries Board want to build

up the local church so that it thrives and its ministry grows at home and around the world.

D. Finance matters

Most of the financial information will be included in *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement*. This supplement is distributed to all the delegates at the time of synod's meeting. The information contained in this printed *Agenda* is the condensed information requested by Synod 1998. These condensed statements (Appendix F of this report) reflect pertinent information for all the agencies and institutions of the CRC. The information provided seeks to strike an appropriate balance between too much and too little information. It is our hope that the balance is right in this, our first, effort.

The financial-services reorganization initiated July 1, 1997, is working well. Significant efficiencies have been achieved, and the agencies have generally benefited from the changes introduced. The consolidation of financial services is now complete, and only further fine-tuning is anticipated. In addition to financial services, the director of finance and administration also oversees Product Services (graphic design, printing, mailing services), Information Services (computer and communication technology), and Building Services.

As is evident from the financial statements provided to synod, the faithful giving of God's people has enabled and supported a global ministry. It is of great encouragement that this support is regularly and systematically received. May the Lord be praised!

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. William Weidenaar, chairman of the board; Dr. David Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; and Mr. Kenneth Horjus, director of finance and administration, when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency and institutional boards (I, D, 1, and 2).

C. That synod adopt the proposed change in Church Order Article 38-f (II, A, 1).

D. That synod adopt the recommended deletion of Church Order Supplement, Article 44-b (II, A, 2).

E. That synod adopt the recommendations of the FSC/Home Missions task force as listed in Appendix A, along with the amendments as listed in Section II, C, 2.

F. That synod adopt the Denominational-Membership Mailing List Policy presented in Appendix B.

G. That synod receive the Report of the Board of Trustees' Evaluation Committee (Appendix C) and the Report of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee on Evaluation (Appendix D) as information.

H. That synod receive the Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Policy (Appendix E) as information.

I. That synod receive the condensed financial statements (Appendix F) of the agencies and institutions as information.

J. That synod approve a time for presentations by the scheduled agencies and by Mr. Ray Elgersma.

Appendix A
Report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches in the CRC

I. Introduction

In its January 1998 meeting, the Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC) Committee requested that its responsibilities be transferred to Christian Reformed Home Missions, which would emphasize ministry development in smaller churches rather than salary support. In response, the Board of Trustees (BOT) decided that a formal proposal for such a realignment of responsibilities should be developed in detail and presented to the BOT before it could be presented to synod. Subsequently, executive director of ministries Dr. Peter Borgdorff proposed a task force consisting of two representatives from the FSC Committee and two from Home Missions to report to the Board of Trustees in time for a synodical decision by Synod 1999.

The FSC appointed Rev. Lambert Sikkema (chair) and Rev. Lester Van Essen; Home Missions appointed Rev. Dirk Hart (secretary) and Rev. Jerry Holleman to be task-force members. The task force understood its mandate to include (A) a detailed proposal for realignment, (B) a schedule for transfer of responsibility, and (C) communication with the FSC-supported churches.

The task force met in May, July, October, and November 1998. A letter was sent to all FSC-supported churches with a request for responses to a draft report prior to the October task-force meeting. Five churches responded with correspondence; two churches and one classis responded by telephone.

II. A brief history of the Fund for Smaller Churches and synodical decisions regarding it

According to the computerized *Index of Synodical Decisions,* support for smaller churches is first mentioned in 1936, when synod adopted a new Home Mission Order. This order classified small churches into three stages: church extension (employment of a home missionary), emergency (employment of stated supply), and needy congregation (supporting an ordained minister of the gospel). The task of Home Missions was seen as guiding the churches through these stages "to the self-sustaining state." The "needy churches" fund soon became known as the Fund for Needy Churches (FNC), and it was part of the work of Home Missions.

Synod 1946 received five overtures asking for a reconsideration and simplification of the administration of this fund. Subsequently, Synod 1947 adopted new rules for the committee, some of which remain in effect to this day. The administration of the fund remained the work of Home Missions.

Synod 1957 requested "the General Committee for Home Missions, in consultation with the standing advisory Budget Committee, to review the purpose and use of the Fund for Needy Churches, and to bring to Synod of 1958 such recommendations as will promote the best use of this fund, and

stimulate faster progress toward self-support among small churches." In response to this mandate, Home Missions clarified the rules for the fund, and synod urged "that recipient congregations become self-supporting as soon as possible" and "that recipient congregations which have no promise of future growth merge with neighboring congregations wherever possible and feasible."

That same year a special advisory committee on budget matters recommended that a separate committee be established to administer the Fund for Needy Churches on the grounds that "the Home Missions Committee has a full-time and distinct duty of its own" and that the administration of the fund "requires a committee having lay members with relatively broad financial and business backgrounds in order that proper interpretation might be made of the questionnaire and financial statement." Synod accepted the advice of the advisory committee, and the Fund for Needy Churches became an entity in its own right, separate from Home Missions. The fund was administered by the Fund for Needy Churches Committee.

Synod 1962 noted that "the emphasis on evangelism has led to the organization of many small churches . . . . It is quite apparent that the (financial) need of many of these churches is due to the fact that their mothers have forsaken them too early. These orphans then turn for assistance to the FNC committee which is not constituted to nurture and supervise them in the years of growing pains. This practice does not seem proper nor wise." The same synod also appointed "a special committee for the purpose of studying and proposing a solution to the larger problem of meeting the actual financial needs of the subsidized churches . . . and of effecting closer coordination between the FNC and the home missions committee in regard to salary structure."

Synod 1986 adopted new rules for FNC and observed that

– Long-term dependency is injurious to congregations.
– A full-time ordained pastor is neither necessary for, nor the right of, every small congregation.
– Good stewardship demands that assistance end at some point.

Synod 1988 introduced a "quota-reduction plan" for what was now called the Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC). Synod reduced quota responsibilities of FSC churches according to a given formula and at the same time reduced salary grants to these churches. (Synod 1997 agreed to drop this policy.) Synod 1988 also decided on rules for funding termination.

In 1994 a task force appointed by a previous synod reported a number of stresses on the system of supporting small churches, including the following:

– Insufficient accountability
– Errors in computation and arithmetic
– Perfunctory ministry reviews
– Inequities in salary levels
– Stagnation of growth and enthusiasm
– Increasing numbers of small churches
– The ill effects of long-term subsidies

Synod 1995 set a terminal point for the funding of all FSC-supported churches by mandating a reduction schedule which would end funding in ten years except in certain cases where the classis "judges the ministry to be of

such a crucial nature or of such historical significance that classis normally contributes at a rate of one dollar for every two dollars contributed by FSC."

III. The current situation

One result of recent synodical decisions regarding FSC-subsidized churches is that applications for funding have declined rapidly. In 1988, 114 congregations received support. This number declined to 105 congregations in 1995, 87 in 1996, 83 in 1997, and 59 in 1998. At this writing (December 1998), it is anticipated that fewer than 50 churches will receive support during calendar year 1999.

The FSC Committee believes that the time has come for the CRCNA to get away from what is essentially a salary-subsidy program and begin investing in ministry instead. This distinction is more than a matter of semantics; it constitutes a fundamental shift in thinking that will, in the end, be helpful to smaller churches and stewardly in the use of denominational funds.

The FSC Committee notes that the current system has several problems:

- Grants are frequently seen as entitlements.
- Inconsistency in the figures appearing in the *Yearbook* and on the application forms is common.
- Confusing numbers for mileage, moving costs, and continuing-education expenses are a chronic problem.
- A number of classes do not check applications for accuracy. Consequently, the (volunteer) FSC Committee is left with considerable extra work.
- The committee is not in a position to follow up with churches to check progress or to offer advice, training, and encouragement.

On the other hand, Christian Reformed Home Missions has a system of financial grants for churches that supports outreach-focused ministry in established churches of all sizes. The grants are endorsed by the classes, which sometimes participate in the funding. The Home Missions regional directors are personally acquainted with the supported ministries and endorse the grant requests. Grants are for a variety of projects ranging from conference attendance to community mailings to salary support for additional staff, and they range from a single payment to quarterly payments for up to three years on an annually reducing basis. Grant-supported churches report quarterly on contacts in the community, people in worship, people in small groups, new members, and total members.

Home Missions also has several consultation processes that help congregations chart a course for the future. Some of these are suitable for small churches. Included are A Basic Consultation (a relatively brief process for direction setting and program planning), Scenario of Choice (a process for helping a church make difficult decisions regarding its future), Merger Planning (a plan to help reduce membership losses for churches that are considering merger), Vacancy Planning (ways to help a church write a church profile and obtain the best possible match when calling a new pastor), and ReBirth (a process to help a church start anew). Each of these processes is customized for the particular size, location, and history of a local church.

It is the view of the task force that small established churches and the denomination will be well served if support for the small churches is changed

to ministry support from Home Missions rather than salary support from the Fund for Smaller Churches. It is envisioned that ministry support will include the following:

– Program funding with emphasis on programs that impact the community
– Funding assistance for Internet connection and e-mail
– Educational allowance for the pastor and/or other leaders
– Funding support for conference attendance
– Assistance in purchasing training materials
– Consultation to assist in evaluation, planning, and decision making
– Small-church conferences for training, sharing, and encouragement
– A newsletter

In considering applications for such support, Home Missions does not intend to use a bottom-line mentality of numerical growth but will look instead for healthy and purposeful ministry that seeks to influence the community with the gospel.

IV. The impact of a transfer from FSC to Home Missions

A. Impact on smaller churches
Following a period of transition (see schedule below), currently supported small churches will no longer be able to expect salary support for a full-time pastor. There will no longer be a synodically determined minimum salary, and for those churches that decide to request ministry support from Home Missions, there will be new reporting structures.

Even though the number of churches that are supported by FSC is declining, the number of small churches in the CRC is increasing. (A small church is defined as a congregation having 150 or fewer members, including adults and children.)

– In 1936 there were 284 congregations, of which 55 were small, or 19 percent.
– In 1958 there were 509 congregations, of which 80 were small, or 16 percent.
– In 1991 there were 955 congregations, of which 275 were small, or 29 percent.
– In 1998 there are 972 congregations, of which 361 are small, or 37 percent, representing 10 percent of the members of the denomination.

The numbers above include emerging churches and some campus ministries. Of the 361 small churches, 94 are supported by Home Missions, approximately 50 are supported by FSC, and 217 are self-supporting or are receiving classical support.

The potential benefits for small churches of a support system that emphasizes ministry and mission development rather than salary support are these:

– An increase in available consultation, training, evaluation, and monitoring (Such services will be especially important for FSC-supported churches as they go through the transition from FSC salary to Home Missions ministry support.)

- Support available for a range of activities including outreach, conferences, consultations, materials, continuing education, and so on
- A greater emphasis on the healthy development of ministry that comes with a focus on the purpose and mission of the church rather than on the survival of the church
- An increase in the number of churches that will benefit from grant support and additional programming for small churches, such as conferences and a newsletter

There will likely be challenges that come with a new support system:

- A higher level of accountability, including quarterly reporting
- Changes in thinking on how best to arrange for pastoral leadership
- Serious consideration of a variety of options for pastoral leadership, such as shared ministries, part-time leadership, merger, bivocational pastors, use of evangelists, satellite arrangements with a larger church, and so on
- Using the annual report on salaries paid within a particular classis, published by the synodical office, as the basis for computing salary rather than a synodically established minimum salary
- More creative and visionary ways of conducting ministry (For the long-established small church this may be especially challenging.)
- A certain level of uncertainty and frustration as some small churches learn to deal with a different agency and different requirements for funding

B. Impact on FSC

Upon adoption of this report, the current FSC Committee will work with Home Missions staff for a transitional period. At the end of the period, the FSC Committee will cease to exist, thus ending thirty or more years of volunteer ministry in the service of smaller churches.

C. Impact on Home Missions

As a result of accepting the responsibility of the FSC-funded churches and embracing a new emphasis on ministry development in small churches, Home Missions will

- See an increase in requests for partnership funding, especially from churches formerly supported by FSC.
- Place new emphasis on program and consultative support for smaller established churches.
- Assign a staff person to be the point person for small-church specialization.
- Request its regional directors and intercultural directors to be more intentionally involved with small churches.
- Work with small churches on alternatives to full-time residential pastoral leadership.
- Incorporate the FSC budget into its own budget on a schedule to be worked out with the Board of Trustees.
- Organize conferences designed for the encouragement and training of small churches.

D. Impact on classes

Just as applications for FSC support must be endorsed by classis, so all Home Missions grant requests are endorsed by classes, frequently through their home-missions committees. In some cases the classis participates in the grant funding. A successful transfer of small-church support from FSC to Home Missions will mean that classes

– Take the grant application process seriously, including talking with the small churches about what constitutes good ministry.
– Participate with Home Missions in ministry reviews and consultations when they are agreed upon.
– Pay special attention to small churches through the church visitors, including questions related to salaries.
– Cooperate with small churches in discovering and implementing alternatives to full-time pastoral leadership when required.
– Be prepared to participate in the financial support of some grants.

E. Impact on other CRC agencies

Other agencies and departments of the denomination may also be affected. For example,

– The denominational finance department will work with Home Missions to handle grants for small churches.
– CRC Publications may wish to give special attention to resources for small churches.
– Calvin Theological Seminary may be involved in specific training of prospective pastors and others for small-church ministry.

F. A proposed schedule for transfer of responsibility

Assuming that Synod 1999 will approve a transfer of FSC's ministry to Home Missions, the task force proposes the following timetable. This timetable assumes that FSC will continue its usual subsidies and policies until August 31, 2000, at which time FSC and Home Missions begin to work together until FSC salary subsidy ends on August 31, 2001. (The August 31 date has been chosen because this is the end of the ministry year and the grant year for Home Missions.)

Apr. 1999:	FSC sends quarterly checks to supported churches.
June 1999:	**Synod decides to transfer responsibility.**
July 1999:	FSC distributes application forms for calendar year (CY) 2000 to FSC-supported churches.
July 1999:	FSC sends quarterly checks to supported churches.
Sept. 1999:	Classes endorse FSC applications for CY2000.
Oct. 1999:	FSC sends quarterly checks to supported churches.
Nov. 1999:	FSC begins consideration of support applications and notifies churches of its decisions.
Jan. 2000:	FSC sends quarterly checks to supported churches.
Apr. 2000:	FSC sends out checks to supported churches.
Apr. 2000:	**Annual Home Missions board meeting receives a detailed plan on how Home Missions intends to support smaller churches.**
July 2000:	FSC sends out checks to supported churches.

July 2000:	**Small churches wishing salary and ministry support for 2001 fill out FSC salary-support forms for the period January 1, 2001, through August 31, 2001, and Home Missions ministry-support forms for the period September 1, 2001, through August 31, 2002, and send these requests to the appropriate classical committee.**
Sept. 2000:	FSC ceases to exist. Home Missions with the help of the former FSC secretary and the denominational finance department begins to administer FSC funds.
Sept. 2000:	Classes endorse requests for salary support and ministry support from small churches.
Oct. 2000:	Home Missions sends out FSC checks to supported churches.
Jan. 2001:	Home Missions sends out FSC checks to supported churches.
Jan. 2001:	Home Missions' regional directors endorse grant applications for ministry support.
Apr. 2001:	**Annual Home Missions board meeting approves Home Missions grants that begin September 1, 2001.**
July 2001:	Home Missions sends out last FSC checks.
Sept. 2001:	Home Missions sends out first quarterly ministry-support payments.
Dec. 2001:	Home Missions' quarterly reports are due from the churches.
Dec. 2001:	Home Missions sends out second quarterly ministry-support payments.
	And so on.

F. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to representatives of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches in the CRC when this report is discussed.

2. That synod adopt the report of the task force on small-church support as endorsed by the Board of Trustees and transfer the support of small churches to Christian Reformed Home Missions according to the proposed timetable.

3. That synod dissolve FSC as of August 31, 2000, with thanks for its ministry, and request the present FSC secretary to advise Home Missions through December 31, 2001.

4. That synod retain the FSC/Small-Church Support ministry share through calendar year 2002 and request the Board of Trustees to evaluate the need for a continued separate ministry share beyond 2002.

Appendix B
Policy re the Use of the Denominational-Membership Mailing List

I. Purpose
   Synod authorizes the development and maintenance of a denominational-membership mailing list for the purposes of

A. Serving the congregations of the denomination and approved organizations that wish to convey information or solicit financial support.

B. Providing statistical research for the maintenance of an accurate denominational profile.

II. Administration

A. Synod assigns responsibility for the administration of the denominational mailing list to the Board of Trustees, which, in turn, assigns that responsibility to the denominational office (the executive director of ministries and the general secretary).

B. In order to maximize the mailing list's accuracy and value for these purposes, synod urges each church council, upon request, to provide the appropriate information annually to the denominational office. However, a church council may request that its membership be excluded from

1. All mailings of any kind to members' homes.

2. Any mailing list prepared for use by any agency other than denominational assemblies, agencies, and institutions.

3. All mailings except those that are for research purposes only.

C. Classes and church councils shall be granted use of their own portion of the denominational-membership mailing list upon receipt of a written request.

D. Requests for the use of the denominational-membership mailing list shall be submitted in writing to the denominational office of the executive director of ministries or the general secretary. Agencies and institutions of the CRC may use the mailing list or part thereof up to three times per calendar year without a written request. Additional use of the mailing list within a calendar year must receive prior approval from the executive director of ministries. All other authorized users of the denominational mailing list are restricted to one time per calendar year.

E. Each user of the mailing list or part thereof for fund-raising purposes shall be subject to a rental fee established annually for that purpose—except for the assemblies, agencies, and institutions of the CRC, which may use the database free for up to three times per year. The rental fee shall be calculated on a prorated basis for a partial use of the database and shall reflect the cost incurred by the CRC in the development and maintenance of the database as well as the cost of producing the requested portions of the database.

F. When mailings are made by an "outside" printing house or agency, it must be agreed in writing that the mailing list, the database, or any other format containing the information used for the mailing is available for the exclusive use of the instant mailing only and may not be reproduced, the same being exclusive property under the copyright of synod (cf. statement in Section III, E of this policy). It is understood that the Christian Reformed Church in North America may take such security measures as it deems appropriate to assure compliance with the copyright provisions.

G. Organizations approved for financial support within a classis may request the use of the mailing-list database for that classis only if a written authorization from that classis is received. Similarly, an appropriately adjusted procedure may be followed if an organization is approved by a church council for communication or solicitation in that congregation.

H. Each user of the denominational-membership mailing list is required to subscribe to the fund-raising Ethical Guidelines as approved by the Board of Trustees.

III. Categories of authorized users

A. Assemblies, agencies, and institutions of the CRC may use the denominational-membership mailing list without charge up to three times per calendar year.

B. All other organizations recommended by synod for financial support as listed in the *Yearbook* may use the denominational-membership mailing-list database (or a portion thereof) for a rental fee as established from time to time.

C. A church council may request in writing that its portion of the denominational-membership mailing list be made available for a nominal service charge to an agency or organization it has approved. This provision also applies to local Christian schools supported by a particular church or particular churches.

D. The information contained in the *Yearbook* is in the public domain. Printed labels of churches and pastors in the CRC may be obtained upon the payment of a nominal service fee if the use of the labels is consistent with the policies and purposes of the Christian Reformed Church.

E. The following proprietary-right statement will appear on database disks.

> Proprietary Right: Files on the database disk are for the exclusive use of the instant mailing only as ordered. These files shall not be copied in any manner, whole or in part. The ID line (the 1st line) is required to be used in total on all mailing labels. Failure to include the ID line in whole or in part is prohibited. The information in this file may not be used to obtain further information about CRC members such as telephone numbers. Misuse of this file or any part thereof shall cancel the privileges of its use in the future, the same being exclusive property under the copyright of synod.

Appendix C
Report of the Board of Trustees' Evaluation Committee – Christian Reformed Church in North America

I. Introduction and background

The Board of Trustees' Evaluation Committee was established as a result of actions taken on Overture 23, which called for "Synod 1998 to appoint a committee to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure and functioning of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)." After deliberations in synodical committee resulted in a majority and minority report, the minority report prevailed and

recommended that "synod instruct the Board of Trustees to engage in a review of its policies, programs, goals, and performance per requirements of its constitution and bylaws (Bylaw II, E, 2) and report its findings with appropriate recommendations to Synod 1999" (*Acts of Synod 1998,* p. 390).

The thrust of the overture was concern about financial management by the Board of Trustees in the wake of the IRM investment situation and the greater-than-anticipated cost of the Free to Serve rallies. In addition to the stated purposes of the overture, dialogue on the floor of synod revealed lingering concerns over the concentration of governance in a small number of people and the ecclesiastical understanding of the place of the local church as foundational in Reformed theology.

In the interest of conducting an objective review, as called for in the debate of the original overture, the BOT appointed an evaluation committee composed predominantly of non-BOT members to complete an external evaluation. Thus, this report is submitted to the BOT for its consideration and subsequent decision regarding which of the observations and recommendations contained herein, or others the BOT deems important, will be reported to Synod 1999.

In conducting its review, the Evaluation Committee used a variety of methods and procedures, which included but were not limited to (A) *evaluation of official documents* (e.g., BOT constitution and bylaws, BOT minutes and policy statements, Ministries Coordinating Council [MCC] minutes, inter- and intradepartmental memoranda, report of the executive director of ministries to Synod 1998); (B) *personal and telephone interviews* with the general secretary (GS), the executive director of ministries (EDM), a variety of staff and BOT members, and selected agency staff and board members; and (C) extensive *assessment and analysis of the findings* by committee deliberation. Special attention was given to the Report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the United States, which will be brought to Synod 1999 for action. That report was focused on an analysis and evaluation of all the present governance structures, and not exclusively on the BOT. The U.S. Structure Committee report and the BOT Evaluation Committee share some common concerns and recommendations, which will be noted in the report which follows.

II. Organization of the evaluation and report

The Evaluation Committee members met for two days in each of three successive months and accepted assignments in three major areas for research and investigation between meetings: financial integrity and management; program development through the Denominational Ministry Plan; and governance, BOT mandate, and communication to the churches. All evaluative observations and recommendations were measured against the bylaws of the Board of Trustees of CRCNA (adopted by Synod 1996), with a primary focus on Section II, Part B.

A. Financial integrity and management

The financial-integrity and management concerns that precipitated Overture 23 (Synod 1998) were the IRM investments, the BOT response to potential losses, and the Free to Serve overrun. During evaluation this question was asked: Could these happen again? Prior to September 1997,

when IRM announced it would no longer make interest payments on investments, a synodical investment policy existed, but it was generally ignored as a guide to investments of reserve assets by agencies of the CRCNA. Prior to the IRM default, the Board of Trustees had appointed a task force to propose a new investment policy, which was reviewed by Synod 1998 and is now in effect. Provided that this new policy governs future investments, investments in companies like IRM should be very unlikely in the future.

Free to Serve was a denominational initiative which involved events in seven localities. Because this was a new venture with many local variables, the precise cost could not be determined. Therefore, a donor was secured to cover any cost overrun. However, because of the donor's illness, the deficit was not covered immediately, and the cost was borrowed from other funds. Such a situation could recur unless a prospective donor is asked to sign a letter of intent that would be binding on the donor's estate in the event of death. Sound accounting procedure, as well as experience gained, will assist in the management of similar situations in the future.

The Evaluation Committee spent considerable time reviewing the system of budget preparation being followed by the agencies and the BOT Budget Review Committee, which was fully functional during the 1998 budget deliberations. There are currently many stages of budget formation: The BOT determines the fiscal health of the church and may or may not propose a cap on increase of ministry shares; each agency proposes a budget within that cap or with other considerations, such as equalization among agencies based on inequities or demonstrated shortfalls; agencies briefly share their budget deliberations (usually after their respective boards have considered the budgets) with other agencies' representatives on MCC; the BOT Budget Review Committee meets with each agency head to ascertain whether the program initiatives, ongoing and innovative, match the amounts requested; and the BOT votes on the recommendations of the Budget Review Committee. The process, while time-consuming, is open, and it has the potential to produce a ministry-driven budget.

Not all income to agencies comes by way of ministry shares, and other income, often referred to as "over-budget," has been less of a factor in the budget deliberations. An administrative policy has been established which creates an income floor as well as a budget ceiling, based on actual revenues of the previous year. However, there has been no uniform policy for the agencies about the amount of financial reserve each needs and at what point that reserve affects the request for additional funding through ministry shares or other solicitations.

B. Program development

Program development through the Denominational Ministry Plan is foundational to the restructuring efforts which produced the Board of Trustees. The overarching goal was to decrease agency isolation and increase the reality of a common mission with various means of approach. The Denominational Ministry Plan is the result of denomination-wide, grassroots, town-hall-type meetings, strategic-planning initiatives, and interagency refinement. With the plan firmly in place since Synod 1997, the question remains: How is cooperation secured from the agencies, through MCC, in support of the Denominational Ministry Plan?

The Evaluation Committee found several ways in which cooperation is gained. First, the budget review now includes the conjunction of finance and program. Ideally, both ongoing agency programs and new initiatives are reflected in budget proposals reviewed by the BOT. Ministry must drive costs; ministry must be in line with the Denominational Ministry Plan, which represents a covenant between agencies, the BOT, and synod. Budgets now reflect the cost of each agency's contribution to the fulfillment of the Denominational Ministry Plan's objectives. Both financial policies and program development are designed to avoid top-down management and to promote a cooperative (rather than competitive) relationship among the agencies.

The Ministries Coordinating Council is the key to accomplishing the ministry plan, because it is the arena where agencies meet, hold each other to their corporate tasks, and continue to envision a unified ministry for the Christian Reformed Church. The Denominational Ministry Plan is the blue-print and common reference point for specific plans and new programs. The Evaluation Committee questioned whether the plan was refined enough to direct day-to-day operations within agencies. The EDM on behalf of the BOT created an administrative team which has been active in making the Denominational Ministry Plan a workable, year-by-year, agency-specific plan of achievable objectives. The team facilitates interagency sessions to work out the necessary strategies and the assignment of responsibility. Accomplishment of any objective depends on interagency cooperation, which also rests upon full understanding of the targets by the agency boards, encouragement within MCC, and, if necessary, consideration of and review by the BOT.

Communication is vital among the agencies and between them and the BOT. The BOT receives all agency board and MCC minutes quarterly as information but without a mechanism for a more direct communication link. BOT members visit other boards as observers but without a specific mandate. An agency director (MCC representative) often carries the burden of commu-nication from the agency's staff and board to MCC and back again. While some dialogue occurs among individuals (boards and staff), there is little formal, direct communication with the BOT. The EDM is the communication link between the MCC and the BOT.

Although the BOT is charged with examining the size and composition of agency boards from time to time, agencies are especially resistant to any suggestion of change in their board structures. The Evaluation Committee concurs with the observation of the report of the U.S. Structure Committee "that the complex structure of agency governance has caused considerable confusion, lack of ministry integration, and sometimes conflict. The creation of the BOT, coupled with the retention of the agency boards, has resulted in dual and competing governance. . . ." Some of the recommendations which follow address these issues.

C. Structure

The governance structure, the BOT mandate, and the BOT's relationship to the churches were reviewed; both the way this relationship is organized and how it functions were examined. Of special interest are various ways in which interaction occurs among synod, the BOT, the agencies, and the people of the denomination, as represented in classes and congregations. The committee

concludes that the formation of the BOT was a significant and important step in ministry development in the CRCNA. After five years of BOT operation, it is appropriate to examine the workings of the overall denominational structure, as is being done as part of the U.S. Structure Committee's report and recommendations, with which the Evaluation Committee closely identifies.

The change in structure which created the BOT expanded the function of the denominational administrative body from that of an interim committee handling only necessary items between meetings of synod to one which has direction-setting responsibilities for the denomination and its agencies, through which it carries out ministry. Support for this expanded role is not always evident among the constituency, especially with regard to issues such as those that brought Overture 23 to Synod 1998. However, synod's decision that the BOT evaluate itself, rather than be evaluated externally, suggests synod's confidence that the BOT has the capacity to be self-correcting.

The Evaluation Committee believes that, despite the manageable size of the present regionally based BOT and its attempt to model efficiency of operation to other agency boards, the loss of classical representation has resulted in a loss of ministry consciousness and support from diverse classical constituencies and thereby from the local churches. Both nomination/election of delegates (voting for persons often unknown) and subsequent reporting by delegates to all the classes in the region is time-consuming and only minimally effective. The most comprehensive board within the structure, the Board of Trustees, should reflect the historic understanding of how various levels of governance connect.

In addition, the structure within which the denominational ministries operate has a cumbersome system of autonomous, isolated boards with little direct connection to the BOT. Perhaps planners envisioned a voluntary interaction, but observation of the present reality convinces the Evaluation Committee that relationships must be a logical and inherent part of the structure. In the past each agency was independently joined to the constituency through board members who advocated for them. But the Evaluation Committee believes that the governance function of boards should always take priority over the communication function of board members.

The division of labor between the general secretary and the executive director of ministries within the administrative structure seems clear and, with the present personnel, has run smoothly most of the time. Because MCC is the mechanism created to unify governance, the role of the EDM as chairperson is vital. The general secretary is present at MCC in an advisory capacity, which also reflects the relationship of his role to the entire church. Though the general secretary is less visible than the EDM in daily operations, the committee believes his presence maintains the proper balance between the ecclesiastical and the management aspects of the work of the denomination. His advisory role is also vital to the appropriate integration of theological reflection with management and governance activities.

III. Observations and recommendations

Given the sweeping changes that came with restructuring in the early 1990s, it should be noted that the years of transition have been more fruitful than frustrating. Moving from the Synodical Interim Committee with a general secretary to a Board of Trustees with both a general secretary for ecclesiastical

matters and an executive director of ministries for program oversight increased the complexity of the organization while calling for better programmatic and fiscal accountability, eventual coordination, and some cost-cutting resulting from increased efficiency. The BOT should be commended for significant progress toward providing policies and practices for the various agencies and institutions that make up the Christian Reformed Church. Several important policy documents, budget guidelines, and strategic plans are now in place as a result of the BOT's efforts:

- Denominational Ministry Plan
- Ministries Coordinating Council
- Guidelines and Review Process for Agency Budget Submissions
- Investment Policy of the CRC
- Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Policy
- A centralized, interagency fiscal accounting system
- Gains in ethnic and gender diversity

In areas where problems were uncovered during its evaluation, the Evaluation Committee was encouraged by and often supportive of the tone and recommendations of the U.S. Structure Committee's report relating to centralization, governance, and board restructuring. These recommendations, coupled with the policy documents mentioned above, should provide the required accountability and integrity to ensure stewardly management of the many resources God has made available to the CRCNA.

IV. Recommendations re fiscal integrity and management

A. Financial-reserves policy
The disparity in financial reserves between agencies is great and potentially a source of misunderstanding and friction. The Evaluation Committee believes that agency financial reserves must become part of the budget-review process and that policies must be developed to justify amounts of reserve and their purpose.

B. Communicating a budget cap
When the BOT believes a cap is justified to contain the growth of spending, such information should be communicated in advance to agencies via the MCC, along with the reasons for such a spending containment. The existence of a cap or other fiscal guidelines should be communicated to the agencies in adequate time for budget formation.

C. Budget-review process
The budget-review process should be continued, with more time given for MCC representatives to present their proposals to each other (peer review) and with opportunity for the director and selected support staff of each agency to present the agency budget to the BOT Budget Review Committee for a maximum of two hours.

V. Recommendations re program development within the Denominational Ministry Plan

A. Communication and information flow

The BOT should establish stronger communication linkages, prospectively as well as retrospectively, by means of clear liaison relationships between the BOT, the MCC, and the agency boards. Even if the report of the U.S. Structure Committee is adopted, there will be a period of transition. Until permanent changes occur, the Evaluation Committee recommends (1) that two BOT members be assigned to each agency to receive board-member mailings, attend at least two meetings of the board or executive committee per year, and establish a relationship with the executive director of the agency; (2) that three BOT members rotate in attendance at MCC as observers to monitor the interagency efforts to accomplish the Denominational Ministry Plan; (3) that the BOT share its agenda with MCC to ascertain if any agency input is required for a particular deliberation. Before a decision is made by the BOT which directly affects an agency, there should be an open discussion with a representative of that agency. The Evaluation Committee supports the U.S. Structure Committee's proposal to strengthen the link between the BOT and the classes by placing BOT members on the classical ministries committees of their respective classes.

B. Monitoring and evaluating the Denominational Ministry Plan

A committee that includes one or more BOT members should join staff to become an oversight group assigned specifically to monitor the Denominational Ministry Plan. This subcommittee will define in detail all tasks by year, specify the participation of the named agencies, and form a plan for annually evaluating the accomplishments for inclusion in the unified report to synod.

C. Budget/program review

The Evaluation Committee supports the effort of the BOT to continually link budget considerations with any agency's contribution to the accomplishment of the Denominational Ministry Plan. The overarching criteria for increase/decrease in budget should be an agency's efforts to support the Denominational Ministry Plan and to promote the true and significant coordination which synod envisioned. Even traditional entities must be incorporated into the ongoing denominational plan.

VI. Recommendations re Board mandate, governance, and relationship with the churches

A. Classically based Board of Trustees

Though we acknowledge the risks of inefficiency which often characterize large boards, we conclude, with the U.S. Structure Committee, that the BOT should be classically based. Classical representation would bring governance, accountability, and ownership closer to the classes and congregations, fostering greater trust. It would allow an avenue for local ministry initiatives to get support from the broader constituency and would promote a more direct communication link both to and from agencies, the BOT, classes, and congregations. The relationship could be further strengthened if all BOT members were automatically members of classical ministries committees. This link between classes and the BOT would more directly involve the local classes in

matters of denominational vision and mission and in taking responsibility for local ministry. However, the committee suggests that criteria for BOT membership, i.e., "qualified church members," not be limited to service as elder or deacon but include other governance experience as well, so as not to greatly limit gender diversity (see U.S. Structure Committee report, pp. 337-38, and Sample Nomination Form).

B. Agency boards linked to BOT

Also in support of the U.S. Structure Committee report, we believe that agency boards should be replaced by councils (called ministry councils) that are operating committees of the BOT. This arrangement would give agencies a direct relationship with the BOT. As challenging as such a change would be, it would eliminate one layer of administration, simplify governance structures, reduce the temptation for competition among agencies, and enhance governance without sacrificing the support base. Instead of BOT members needing to be informed about every agency's workings, each would have special ties to one of the agencies and serve as spokesperson to the BOT in matters relevant to that agency.

C. Strengthen Board connections with MCC

A subcommittee of the BOT should be appointed to receive agency proposals from the MCC, which is the major clearing house for initiatives, and to bring them before the BOT to ensure integration and consistency with BOT guidelines. This action could be integrated with the liaison function recommended in V, A above.

D. Administrative officers as leaders in the MCC

There should be no distance or disconnection between BOT administrative officers (the executive director of ministries and the general secretary) and the integrating body, presently called the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC). Matters of governance and integrated ministry call for the executive director of ministries to remain as chairperson, but the general secretary should gain visibility and influence in matters of an ecclesiastical, theological, and spiritual nature.

E. Term of service for agency personnel

The BOT should investigate and consider the meaning of *term of service* for agency personnel who are ministers of the Word, possibly considering them to be on loan from the churches. Gifted persons could serve for a time, return to local churches, enhance local vision for ministry, and strengthen the bond between the membership and the denomination.

VII. Conclusions and overarching recommendations

The observations and recommendations of this report logically lead to the need for continued self-evaluation of the workings of the BOT, of its executive officers and committees, and of individual board members. Because of the wide-ranging authority and responsibility given to this board by synod, it should be a self-correcting entity that systematically evaluates its governance structures, a model for others to emulate. If the recommendations of the U.S. Structure Committee should become reality in 1999, the BOT mandate will expand and will require even more attention to efficient functioning.

In addition to the suggestions listed in the previous section, the following overarching recommendations appear prudent to the Evaluation Committee.

A. *Recommendation 1*

The authority of the general secretary and executive director of ministries, as outlined in their job descriptions and reflected in their experience, should be brought into a more consistent and direct relationship with the authority and mandate of the BOT. This recommendation has two distinct dimensions. First, there seems to be some dissonance between the governance authority vested in the BOT and the authority vested in its chief executive officer for governance matters, the executive director of ministries. Second, there seems to be some dissonance between the extensive advisory authority and role of the BOT and the authority of its executive officer for ecclesiastical and polity matters, the general secretary. The authority of both positions needs further clarification within the BOT and the constituency of the CRCNA so that the BOT and its executive officers can be more proactive in governance and polity matters.

Ground: It is apparent from a review of the written documents and from interviews with the officers that the general secretary and executive director of ministries have less authority than is necessary for the efficient and effective implementation of the Board's extensive mandate. This limited authority has often led to confusion, misunderstanding, and delay in the implementation of programs and coordinative efforts for which the BOT is clearly responsible. The BOT should conduct its own assessment of the inconsistencies and dissonances that presently exist between its mandate and the authority vested in its executive officers as well as its direct responsibility to enhance the unified ministry of the denomination through joint strategic planning, coordination, and integration.

B. *Recommendation 2*

The BOT should engage in an ongoing board-development program that would include systematic theological reflection on elements and issues arising from a comprehensive self-evaluation and review of its mandate and authority.

Ground: Governing boards often suffer from the "tyranny of the urgent" and give too little time to policy development and visioning for the future. Effective corporate models of governance and development do not necessarily leave room for essential theological reflection, which must be foundational to denominational ministries. Attention to board development, preferably with the assistance of an external facilitator, would enhance the BOT's knowledge of the denomination and its diverse ministries, build greater trust relationships among those ministries, and internalize the theological and servanthood foundations of its work.

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Board of Trustees' Evaluation Committee
Anthony Diekema, chairperson
Marvin Hofman
Stanley Koster
Carol Rottman
Ed Vanderveer
Nick Van Duyvendyk
Jeanne Vogelzang

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Appendix D
Report of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee on Evaluation

The Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America gratefully receives the report of the Board of Trustees' Evaluation Committee and appreciates the thoroughness and care with which the committee completed its work. The BOT offers the following comments, reemphasizes some key points in the report, and dedicates our efforts to the accomplishment of others mentioned.

A. As the Board, we note and endorse

1. All efforts to strengthen the relationship between and the communication among the BOT, the agencies, and their boards as well as all efforts to increase the free flow of information and concerns between the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC) and the BOT.

2. Expanding the membership of the BOT to become classically based rather than regionally based, in accordance with the U.S. Structure Committee's recommendations. In the new structure the BOT is recognized as being the broadest of the boards and as being comprehensively linked to the classes and their constituent churches. Agency boards or ministry councils would exercise their connection to the classes through the BOT, thus eliminating duplication. The present isolation and autonomy of all the boards has not accomplished the goal of coordination of ministry for the CRC.

3. Investigating and considering terms of service for certain agency personnel and all other means to increase the connections between the various components within the Christian Reformed Church.

4. Strengthening the governance authority of the BOT through its executive director of ministries and its advisory authority and influence through the general secretary.

B. The Board, in concurrence with the Evaluation Committee report, pledges careful scrutiny and task analysis of the following:

1. Fiscal management – Following the transition from the Synodical Interim Committee to the BOT, increased attention has been given to the smooth management of resources as well as of programs. Despite the unexpected jolt of the IRM situation, fiscal management continues to improve, including a refined budget-review process, the use of spending caps, and unified investment policies. All matters financial (including reserve policies) continue to receive scrutiny.

2. Board development – Board development is a somewhat foreign concept to many board members. The BOT is becoming what synod envisioned it could be when it was created and when it was defined in the constitution and bylaws. Especially during times of transition, a board must be self-conscious about its own maturation.

3. Board self-evaluation – The BOT bylaws mandate periodic evaluation to confirm that the Board is doing what synod has mandated it to do and to know this by objective rather than subjective measures.

Therefore, the BOT receives the Evaluation Committee's report with gratitude and discharges the members from their duties with sincere thanks.

<div align="right">
Board of Trustees' Subcommittee on Evaluation
Duane Kelderman, convener
Aldon Kuiper
Jake Kuipers
Gordon Pols
Carol Rottman
</div>

Appendix E
Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Policy

1. Background

1.1 The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA (the Board) manages the business and affairs of the agencies and institutions through elected agency and institutional trustees. The use of the term "Board" and/or "trustee" in this policy statement shall refer to both the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the agency or institutional boards and trustees of the CRC agencies and institutions.

1.2 Board members are fiduciaries who must hold positions of trust and exercise duties of care, including a general obligation to avoid conflicts of interest.

1.3 Board members have the duty of guiding an agency's/institution's affairs in such a manner as to achieve the objectives of the agency/institution. Board members have a fiduciary duty to act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the agency/institution, and to be loyal to the agency/institution.

1.4 Honesty is the first component of this fiduciary duty. A Board member must disclose the entire truth and avoid fraudulent transactions or misleading representation.

1.5 Good faith is the second component of this fiduciary duty. Board members must pursue the best interests of the agency/institution. This means that a Board member may not pursue any improper purpose while acting on behalf of the agency/institution.

1.6 The duty of loyalty and the avoidance of conflicts of interest mean that a Board member must give loyalty to the agency/institution and must not subordinate the interests of the agency/institution to his or her personal interests.

1.7 Even when conflicts do not exist, Board members should understand that Board decisions may affect the business or affairs of a Board member. The effect is generally financial, but even social or political gain may violate the fiduciary duty. Board members must avoid direct or indirect benefits to relatives, friends, and associates.

2. Policy, Purpose, and Definition

2.1 A Board member must purposefully avoid conflicts of interest unless authorized under paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5. This policy statement applies to all Board members. Recognizing that synod carefully selects Board members, relying upon the trust of nominating assemblies in their integrity, judgment, and courage, the Board reasonably expects that no member would ever use his or her position for personal gain. However, to avoid any misunderstanding, this policy statement is promulgated and adopted.

2.2 A conflict of interest exists when a Board member has a personal interest of any kind which has the potential to be inconsistent in any degree with the best interests of the agency/institution. When a Board member's personal interests, whether real or perceived, could supersede or conflict with his or her dedication to the best interests of the agency/institution, a conflict of interest arises. The test of a conflict of interest is not just whether a personal interest actually influences a Board member, but whether circumstances lend themselves to such a possibility. Examples include

   a. Conflicting financial interests.
   b. Use of confidential information for personal gain.
   c. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.
   d. Use of agency/institutional time and facilities for personal purpose or other activities.

2.3 Board members must recognize that the appearance of a conflict of interest, even when in fact it may not exist, can be damaging to the agency/institution and must be avoided.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 A Board member should resign his or her position if he or she reasonably could conclude that any kind of financial or personal obligation might improperly affect his or her judgment on behalf of the Board or agency/institution. Each person must examine his or her own activities and those of his or her immediate family to ensure that no condition exists which creates a potential conflict of interest or a potentially embarrassing situation with respect to transactions between the Board member and the agency/institution. Board members shall sign and complete the attached Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Statement.

3.2 Unless the provisions in paragraphs 3.3 through 3.5 are followed, a Board member shall not solicit or be a party, directly or indirectly, to any financial or other opportunity between the agency/institution and

   a. Himself, herself, or a family member.
   b. Any firm (meaning copartnership or other unincorporated association) of which he, she, or any family member is a partner, member, employee or agent.

    c. Any not-for-profit organization of which he or she or member(s) of his or her immediate family is an officer, director, employee, or agent.

    d. Any profit corporation in which he or she is an officer, director, employee, agent, or a stockholder owning more than 1 percent (1%) of the total outstanding stock of any class if the stock is not listed on a stock exchange, or stock with a present total value in excess of $25,000 if the stock is listed on a stock exchange.

    e. Any trust of which he or she is a grantor, beneficiary, or trustee.

3.3 In the event a potential contract or arrangement which could present a conflict situation described in paragraph 3.2 is presented to the Board, the affected Board member shall

    a. Not participate in any way on behalf of the agency/institution in discussion or negotiation of the contract or arrangement or in the approval of the contract or arrangement.

    b. Promptly disclose in writing any financial, personal, or pecuniary interest in the contract or arrangement to the Board or any other official body which has the power to approve the contact or arrangement, which disclosure shall be made a matter of record in the Board's official proceeding.

3.4 A contract or arrangement referenced in paragraph 3.3 must be approved by a vote of not less than two-thirds (⅔) of the full Board or of the approving body in open session without the vote of the affected Board member.

3.5 The Board or other official body must disclose the following summary information in its official minutes as to contracts or arrangements referenced in paragraph 3.2:

    a. The name of each party involved in the contract or arrangements.

    b. The terms of the contract or arrangements, including duration, financial consideration between the parties, facilities or services of the entity included in the contract, and the nature and degree of assignment of employees of the agency/institution for fulfillment of the contract.

    c. The nature of the Board member's financial, personal, or pecuniary interest.

3.6 A Board member shall not engage in a business transaction or arrangement in which the member may profit from his or her official position or authority or benefit financially from confidential information which the member has obtained or may obtain by reason of such position or authority.

Adopted by the BOT December 3, 1998

CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

I have read and understand this Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Policy. There is neither a present nor potential conflict of interest other than those listed below. I have observed and will continue to observe the Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure Policy carefully.

_____
Date

_____
Signature

_____
Printed Name

DISCLOSURE(S)

(Indicate *none* if applicable. Otherwise
please give full explanation of the conflict.)

Appendix F
Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Back to God Hour/CRC-TV

| | June 30, 1997 | | | | | June 30, 1998 | | | | |
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 1,057	1,672	81	22	2,832	$ 2,443	2,464		-	4,907
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			-
Receivables & Advances	59	-	-	-	59	64	-		-	64
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-
Prepaids & Advances	80	-	-	-	80	71	-		-	71
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds			1,643	-	1,643	1,705			-	1,705
Equities	76		276	-	352	369			100	469
Partnerships	275		628	50	953	286			-	286
Property (non-operating)			616	-	616	6			-	6
PP & E	727	-	-	-	727	899			-	899
Other	203	-	-	-	203	225	-	-	-	225
Total Assets	2,477	1,672	3,244	72	7,465	6,068	2,464	-	100	8,632
Accounts Payable	316	-	-	-	316	239	-	-	-	239
Notes/Loans Payable	361	-	-	-	361	420	-	-	-	420
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	2,284	-	2,284	1,690	-	-	-	1,690
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	677	-	2,284	-	2,961	2,349	-	-	-	2,349
Net Assets	$ 1,800	1,672	960	72	4,504	$ 3,719	2,464	-	100	6,283

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Board Restrictions: 1,672,000

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. The income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Permanently restricted endowment funds.

Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. The income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.

Board Restrictions: 700,000 Television 1,763,577 Estate

Permanently restricted endowment funds.

Agency: Back to God Hour/CRC-TV
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:											
Ministry Share	$	4,324	$	4,384	$	4,420	$	4,439	$	4,414	$	4,449
% of Total Income		52.0%		51.7%		55.4%		51.2%		49.6%		48.9%
Other Gift Income:												
Above Ministry Share	$	3,309	$	3,584	$	3,259	$	3,402	$	3,399	$	3,301
Estate Gifts	$	559	$	476	$	179	$	691	$	1,030	$	1,202
Total Gift Income		3,868		4,061		3,438		4,093		4,429		4,503
% of Total Income		46.5%		47.9%		43.1%		47.2%		49.8%		49.5%
Other Income:												
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Grants	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	129	$	37	$	127	$	141	$	59	$	141
Total Other Income		129		37		127		141		59		141
% of Total Income		1.6%		0.4%		1.6%		1.6%		0.7%		1.6%
TOTAL INCOME		8,321		8,482		7,985		8,673		8,902		9,093
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):												
Program Services:												
English	$	2,591	$	2,645	$	2,579	$	2,496	$	2,473	$	2,481
FTEs		5		5		5		5		5		5
International	$	2,695	$	2,602	$	2,847	$	2,562	$	2,460	$	2,592
FTEs		12		13		13		13		13		13
Television	$	2,175	$	2,344	$	2,131	$	2,049	$	2,003	$	649
FTEs		7		7		7		7		6		6
Television - Animation	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	7,461	$	7,590	$	7,557	$	7,107	$	6,936	$	5,722
Total Program Service FTEs		24		25		25		25		24		24
% of Total $		86.7%		87.9%		87.4%		88.5%		87.0%		82.9%
% of Total FTEs		77.4%		78.1%		75.8%		75.8%		75.0%		75.0%
Support Services:												
Management & General	$	593	$	510	$	555	$	367	$	378	$	406
FTEs		4		4		4		4		4		4
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
Fund Raising	$	556	$	533	$	538	$	557	$	660	$	777
FTEs		3		3		4		4		4		4
Total Support Service $		1,149		1,043		1,093		924		1,038		1,183
Total Support Service FTEs		7		7		8		8		8		8
% of Total $		13.3%		12.1%		12.6%		11.5%		13.0%		17.1%
% of Total FTEs		22.6%		21.9%		24.2%		24.2%		25.0%		25.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	8,610	$	8,633	$	8,650	$	8,031	$	7,974	$	6,905
TOTAL FTEs		31		32		33		33		32		32
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	(289)	$	(151)	$	(665)	$	642	$	928	$	2,188

Agency: Calvin College
Balance Sheets (000s)

	-----June 30, 1997-----					-----June 30, 1998-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 621	-	-	-	621	$ 194	-	-	-	194
CDs, Time Deposits	100	-	-	-	100	100	-	-	-	100
Marketable Securities	5,268	-	-	-	5,268	7,900	-	-	-	7,900
Receivables & Advances	10,611	-	609	2,603	13,823	13,542	-	404	1,391	15,337
Inventory	631	-	-	-	631	586	-	-	-	586
Prepaids & Advances	755	-	-	-	755	292	-	-	-	292
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	10,239	-	-	6,991	17,230	28,847		-	12,769	41,616
Equities	7,736	-	-	29,818	37,554	10,257		-	29,857	40,114
Partnerships	-	-	-	704	704	-		-	1,727	1,727
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	68	68	13		-	68	81
PP & E	61,720	-	-	-	61,720	68,104	-	-	-	68,104
Other	207	-	1,681	1,502	3,390	155	-	2,130	1,699	3,984
Total Assets	97,888	-	2,290	41,686	141,864	129,990	-	2,534	47,511	180,035
Accounts Payable	2,518	-	-	-	2,518	2,929	-	-	-	2,929
Notes/Loans Payable	9,907	-	-	-	9,907	31,081	-	-	99	31,180
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	5,544	-	-	-	5,544	5,946	-	-	-	5,946
Deferred Income	711	-	-	-	711	599	-	-	-	599
Other	17,063	-	-	-	17,063	18,659	-	-	-	18,659
Total Liabilities	35,743	-	-	-	35,743	59,214	-	-	99	59,313
Net Assets	$ 62,145	-	2,290	41,686	106,121	$ 70,776	-	2,534	47,412	120,722

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions — over 500 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service. student services. etc.. funded by outside sources

Note 4: List details of restrictions — endowed gifts

Agency: Calvin College
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

		Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:												
Ministry Share	$	2,694	$	2,748	$	2,723	$	2,796	$	2,801	$	2,927
% of Total Income		5.8%		5.5%		5.1%		4.8%		4.4%		4.3%
Other Gift Income:												
Above Ministry Share	$	2,091	$	2,095	$	1,782	$	2,253	$	2,873	$	2,785
Estate Gifts	$	90	$	144	$	49	$	4	$	20	$	29
Total Gift Income		2,181		2,239		1,831		2,257		2,893		2,814
% of Total Income		4.7%		4.5%		3.4%		3.9%		4.6%		4.1%
Other Income:												
Tuition & Sales	$	40,233	$	43,651	$	47,596	$	52,014	$	56,505	$	61,483
Grants	$	287	$	255	$	299	$	278	$	258	$	503
Miscellaneous	$	1,208	$	913	$	1,357	$	1,059	$	1,103	$	1,133
Total Other Income		41,728		44,819		49,252		53,351		57,866		63,119
% of Total Income		89.5%		90.0%		91.5%		91.3%		91.0%		91.7%
TOTAL INCOME		46,603		49,806		53,806		58,404		63,560		68,860
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):												
Program Services:												
Education	$	39,695	$	41,915	$	46,333	$	50,701	$	56,162	$	58,418
FTEs		406		393		407		432		456		486
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	39,695	$	41,915	$	46,333	$	50,701	$	56,162	$	58,418
Total Program Service FTEs		406		393		407		432		456		486
% of Total $		86.4%		85.6%		86.8%		87.6%		87.9%		87.6%
% of Total FTEs		80.7%		78.9%		78.6%		80.7%		80.4%		81.3%
Support Services:												
Management & General	$	3,349	$	4,271	$	3,628	$	3,749	$	4,397	$	3,806
FTEs		43		47		49		44		49		50
Plant Operations	$	2,214	$	2,019	$	2,550	$	2,463	$	2,183	$	3,363
FTEs		43		45		48		44		46		46
Fund Raising	$	675	$	746	$	887	$	952	$	1,120	$	1,104
FTEs		11		13		14		16		16		16
Total Support Service $		6,238		7,036		7,065		7,164		7,700		8,273
Total Support Service FTEs		97		105		111		104		111		112
% of Total $		13.6%		14.4%		13.2%		12.4%		12.1%		12.4%
% of Total FTEs		19.3%		21.1%		21.4%		19.3%		19.6%		18.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	45,933	$	48,951	$	53,398	$	57,865	$	63,862	$	66,691
TOTAL FTEs		503		498		518		536		567		598
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	670	$	855	$	408	$	539	$	(302)	$	2,169

Agency: Calvin Seminary
Balance Sheets (000s)

| | June 30, 1997 | | | | | June 30, 1998 | | | | |
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 1,046	-	-	-	1,046	$ 1,253	-	-	-	1,253
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	7,685	7,685	-	-	-	9,840	9,840
Receivables & Advances	1,384	-	28	59	1,471	1,501	-	3	2	1,506
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	132	132	-	-	-	146	146
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
PP & E	4,167	-	-	-	4,167	4,110	-	-	-	4,110
Other	57	-	325	270	652	293	-	503	33	829
Total Assets	6,654	-	353	8,146	15,153	7,157	-	506	10,021	17,684
Accounts Payable	301	-	-	-	301	378	-	-	-	378
Notes/Loans Payable	558	-	-	-	558	263	-	-	-	263
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	654	654		-	-	637	637
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	648	-	-	4	652	791	-	-	38	829
Total Liabilities	1,507	-	-	658	2,165	1,432	-	-	675	2,107
Net Assets	$ 5,147	-	353	7,488	12,988	$ 5,725	-	506	9,346	15,577

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions   scholarship and grants   scholarships and grants

Note 4: List details of restrictions   endowment and annuity   endowments and annuity

Agency: Calvin Seminary
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

		Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:												
Ministry Share	$	1,646	$	1,764	$	1,762	$	1,823	$	1,900	$	1,995
% of Total Income		57.8%		66.2%		57.4%		53.0%		52.3%		51.8%
Other Gift Income:												
Above Ministry Share	$	412	$	165	$	363	$	541	$	468	$	604
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	71	$	145	$	-
Total Gift Income		412		165		363		612		613		604
% of Total Income		14.5%		6.2%		11.8%		17.8%		16.9%		15.7%
Other Income:												
Tuition & Sales	$	792	$	735	$	691	$	761	$	878	$	988
Grants	$	-	$	-	$	143	$	136	$	170	$	164
Miscellaneous	$	-	$	-	$	110	$	108	$	74	$	101
Total Other Income		792		735		944		1,005		1,122		1,253
% of Total Income		27.8%		27.6%		30.8%		29.2%		30.9%		32.5%
TOTAL INCOME		2,850		2,664		3,069		3,440		3,635		3,852
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):												
Program Services:												
Instructional	$	1,047	$	1,169	$	1,734	$	1,834	$	1,820	$	1,777
FTEs		24		24		24		24		24		24
Public Service	$	37	$	53	$	75	$	94	$	58	$	68
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
Academic Support	$	278	$	299	$	375	$	393	$	379	$	474
FTEs		3		3		3		3		3		3
Student Services	$	147	$	165	$	235	$	221	$	230	$	260
FTEs		1		1		1		1		1		1
Student Aid	$	83	$	67	$	111	$	148	$	168	$	258
FTEs		2		2		2		2		2		2
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-										
Total Program Service $	$	1,592	$	1,753	$	2,530	$	2,690	$	2,655	$	2,837
Total Program Service FTEs		30		30		30		30		30		29
% of Total $		64.5%		65.8%		79.9%		77.9%		78.2%		76.6%
% of Total FTEs		85.7%		85.7%		86.8%		85.6%		84.4%		84.2%
Support Services:												
Management & General	$	596	$	636	$	312	$	334	$	403	$	476
FTEs		3		3		3		3		4		4
Plant Operations	$	121	$	114	$	178	$	227	$	185	$	207
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
Fund Raising	$	161	$	160	$	145	$	201	$	154	$	182
FTEs		2		2		2		2		2		2
Total Support Service $		878		910		635		762		742		865
Total Support Service FTEs		5		5		5		5		6		6
% of Total $		35.5%		34.2%		20.1%		22.1%		21.8%		23.4%
% of Total FTEs		14.3%		14.3%		13.2%		14.4%		15.6%		15.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	2,470	$	2,663	$	3,165	$	3,452	$	3,397	$	3,702
TOTAL FTEs		35		35		34		35		35		35
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	380	$	1	$	(96)	$	(12)	$	238	$	150

Agency: Canadian Ministries Board
Balance Sheets (000s)

	December 31, 1997					December 31, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 75	-	-	-	75	$ 70	-	-	-	70
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
PP & E	120	-	-	-	120	116	-	-	-	116
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	195	-	-	-	195	186	-	-	-	186
Accounts Payable	75	-	-	-	75	70	-	-	-	70
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	75	-	-	-	75	70	-	-	-	70
Net Assets	$ 120	-	-	-	120	$ 116	-	-	-	116

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency: **Canadian Ministries Board**

Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual
Avg annual US/Cdn x-rate	0.7880		0.7414		0.7220		0.7327		0.7305
INCOME:									
Classical Ministry Share	$ 618	$	559	$	558	$	564	$	592
% of Total Income	89.6%		93.2%		90.4%		90.4%		89.6%
Other Gift Income:									
Above Ministry Share	$ 23	$	7	$	4	$	8	$	16
Estate Gifts	$ -	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income	23		7		4		8		16
% of Total Income	3.3%		1.2%		0.6%		1.3%		2.4%
Other Income:									
Tuition & Sales	$ -	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Grants	$ 42	$	30	$	50	$	47	$	48
Miscellaneous	$ 7	$	4	$	5	$	5	$	5
Total Other Income	49		34		55		52		53
% of Total Income	7.1%		5.7%		8.9%		8.3%		8.0%
TOTAL INCOME	690		600		617		624		661
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):									
Program Services:									
Govt. Contact/Church in Soc.	$ 29	$	37	$	33	$	40	$	40
FTEs	1		1		1		1		1
Indian Ministries	$ 389	$	330	$	338	$	321	$	319
FTEs	3		3		3		3		3
Electronic Media	$ 144	$	180	$	139	$	123	$	112
FTEs	-		-		-		-		-
Other	$ 10	$	15	$	26	$	37	$	48
FTEs	-		-		-		-		-
	$ -	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs	-		-		-		-		-
	$ -	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
	-		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service $	$ 572	$	562	$	536	$	521	$	519
Total Program Service FTEs	4		4		4		4		4
% of Total $	76.5%		79.4%		79.2%		79.3%		81.6%
% of Total FTEs	66.7%		66.7%		66.7%		66.7%		66.7%
Support Services:									
Management & General	$ 176	$	146	$	141	$	136	$	117
FTEs	2		2		2		2		2
Plant Operations	$ -	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs	-		-		-		-		-
Fund Raising	$ -	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs	-		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service $	176		146		141		136		117
Total Support Service FTEs	2		2		2		2		2
% of Total $	23.5%		20.6%		20.8%		20.7%		18.4%
% of Total FTEs	33.3%		33.3%		33.3%		33.3%		33.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$ 748	$	708	$	677	$	657	$	636
TOTAL FTEs	6		6		6		6		6
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$ (58)	$	(108)	$	(60)	$	(33)	$	25

	December 31, 1997					December 31, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ (251)	-	-	-	(251)	$ 195	-	-	-	195
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	180	-	-	-	180	116	-	-	-	116
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	2,038	-	-	-	2,038	1,525		-	-	1,525
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,967	-	-	-	1,967	1,836	-	-	-	1,836
Accounts Payable	188	-	-	-	188	175	-	-	-	175
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	295	-	-	-	295	659	-	-	-	659
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	483	-	-	-	483	834	-	-	-	834
Net Assets	$ 1,484	-	-	-	1,484	$ 1,002	-	-	-	1,002

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency: Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

		1997 Actual		1998 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	$	-	$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	-	$	-
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Premiums	$	5,427	$	5,469
Grants	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	357	$	184
Total Other Income		5,784		5,653
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		5,784		5,653
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Claims Expense	$	5,131	$	5,193
FTVolunteer(s)		-		-
Insurance Premiums	$	500	$	363
FTEs		-		-
TPA & PPO Fees	$	274	$	314
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
Total Program Service $	$	5,905	$	5,870
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total $		97.5%		95.7%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	154	$	265
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		154		265
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total $		2.5%		4.3%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$	6,059	$	6,135
TOTAL FTEs		3		3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$	(275)	$	(482)

Agency: CRC PUBLICATIONS
Balance Sheets (000s)

	June 30, 1997					June 30, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 434	200	88	-	722	$ 1,136	277	124	-	1,537
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	225	77	55	-	357	360	-	-	-	360
Inventory	2,598	-	-	-	2,598	2,312	-	-	-	2,312
Prepaids & Advances	172	-	-	-	172	155	-	-	-	155
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
PP & E	79	-	-	-	79	53	-	-	-	53
Other	799	-	-	-	799	562	-	-	-	562
Total Assets	4,307	277	143	-	4,727	4,578	277	124	-	4,979
Accounts Payable	311	-	-	-	311	537	-	-	-	537
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Deferred Income	691	-	-	-	691	648	-	-	-	648
Other	232	-	-	-	232	232	-	-	-	232
Total Liabilities	1,234	-	-	-	1,234	1,417	-	-	-	1,417
Net Assets	$ 3,073	277	143	-	3,493	$ 3,161	277	124	-	3,562

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations — Proceeds from sale of Tell property designated for Spanish.   Proceeds from sale of Tell property designated for Spanish.

Note 3: List details of restrictions — Language use restrictions - primarily Russian.   Language use restrictions - primarily Russian.

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency: **CRC PUBLICATIONS**
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:											
Ministry Share	$	248	$	227	$	204	$	219	$	249	$	243
% of Total Income		3.8%		3.5%		3.6%		3.3%		4.0%		3.9%
Other Gift Income:												
Above Ministry Share	$	43	$	17	$	66	$	229	$	99	$	128
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income		43		17		66		229		99		128
% of Total Income		0.7%		0.3%		1.2%		3.5%		1.6%		2.0%
Other Income:												
Tuition & Sales	$	6,130	$	6,119	$	5,234	$	5,888	$	5,800	$	5,691
Grants	$	-	$	23	$	22	$	56	$	8	$	76
Miscellaneous	$	99	$	35	$	155	$	234	$	134	$	152
Total Other Income		6,229		6,177		5,411		6,178		5,942		5,919
% of Total Income		95.5%		96.2%		95.2%		93.2%		94.5%		94.1%
TOTAL INCOME		6,520		6,421		5,681		6,626		6,290		6,290
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):												
Program Services:												
Banner	$	1,357	$	1,467	$	1,473	$	1,569	$	1,479	$	1,276
FTEs		8		8		8		8		8		7
Education	$	2,984	$	3,239	$	3,512	$	3,898	$	3,577	$	3,752
FTEs		21		21		21		22		22		22
World Literature	$	318	$	346	$	378	$	536	$	502	$	632
FTEs		2		4		4		4		4		4
Agency Printing (PS)	$	1,372	$	1,299	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs		22		22								
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	6,031	$	6,351	$	5,363	$	6,003	$	5,558	$	5,660
Total Program Service FTEs		53		55		33		34		34		33
% of Total $		91.8%		94.2%		89.8%		89.7%		90.8%		91.0%
% of Total FTEs		85.5%		87.3%		80.5%		81.0%		85.0%		94.3%
Support Services:												
Management & General	$	538	$	393	$	609	$	688	$	566	$	561
FTEs		9		8		8		8		6		2
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
Fund Raising	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service $		538		393		609		688		566		561
Total Support Service FTEs		9		8		8		8		6		2
% of Total $		8.2%		5.8%		10.2%		10.3%		9.2%		9.0%
% of Total FTEs		14.5%		12.7%		19.5%		19.0%		15.0%		5.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	6,569	$	6,744	$	5,972	$	6,691	$	6,124	$	6,221
TOTAL FTEs		62		63		41		42		40		35
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	(49)	$	(323)	$	(291)	$	(65)	$	166	$	69

	June 30, 1997					June 30, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 216	273	-	-	489	$ 388	319	-	-	707
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	998	-	-	-	998	1,191	450	-	-	1,641
Inventory	369	-	-	-	369	534	-	-	-	534
Prepaids & Advances	28	-	-	-	28	56	-	-	-	56
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	5,673	-	-	-	5,673	7,001		-	-	7,001
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	225	-	-	-	225	177		-	-	177
PP & E	6,203	-	-	-	6,203	5,835	-	-	-	5,835
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	13,712	273	-	-	13,985	15,182	769	-	-	15,951
Accounts Payable	677	-	-	-	677	667	-	-	-	667
Notes/Loans Payable	10,756	-	-	-	10,756	11,278	-	-	-	11,278
Capital Leases	8	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	490	-	-	-	490	445	-	-	-	445
Other	74	-	-	-	74	74	-	-	-	74
Total Liabilities	12,005	-	-	-	12,005	12,464	-	-	-	12,464
Net Assets	$ 1,707	273	-	-	1,980	$ 2,718	769	-	-	3,487

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Balance of land contract.	Balance of land contract.
Note 2: List details of designations	Fellowship fund balance.	Fellowship fund balance and receivable
Note 3: List details of restrictions		
Note 4: List details of restrictions		

Agency: Denominational Services
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

		Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:												
Ministry Share	$	1,390	$	1,295	$	1,539	$	1,564	$	1,523	$	1,520
% of Total Income		50.8%		51.8%		19.6%		19.7%		19.4%		15.6%
Other Gift Income:												
Above Ministry Share	$	-	$	9	$	7	$	22	$	8	$	1
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income		-		9		7		22		8		1
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.4%		0.1%		0.3%		0.1%		0.0%
Other Income:												
Tuition & Sales	$	1,141	$	1,030	$	6,115	$	4,901	$	4,847	$	4,362
Grants	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	250	$	73	$	703
Miscellaneous	$	205	$	168	$	176	$	1,195	$	1,414	$	3,156
Total Other Income		1,346		1,198		6,291		6,346		6,334		8,221
% of Total Income		49.2%		47.9%		80.3%		80.0%		80.5%		84.4%
TOTAL INCOME		2,736		2,502		7,837		7,932		7,865		9,742
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):												
Program Services:												
Synodical Services & Grants	$	496	$	405	$	520	$	670	$	736	$	785
FTEs		4		4		4		4		5		5
Education/FreeToServe	$	-	$	-	$	27	$	275	$	950	$	126
FTEs		-		-		1		1		4		1
CRCPlan	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	$	953	$	809	$	5,641	$	4,779	$	4,715	$	4,630
FTEs		7		7		41		40		39		39
Finance/Payroll Services *	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	41	$	1,030
FTEs		-		-		-		-		1		17
CSIS	$	135	$	178	$	346	$	515	$	530	$	685
FTEs		3		3		4		4		5		5
Personnel	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	99	$	96	$	107
FTEs		-		-		-		2		2		2
Total Program Service $	$	1,584	$	1,392	$	6,534	$	6,338	$	7,068	$	7,363
Total Program Service FTEs		14		14		50		51		56		69
% of Total $		61.9%		55.0%		82.6%		80.5%		84.1%		86.0%
% of Total FTEs		63.6%		63.6%		84.7%		83.6%		84.8%		90.8%
* Includes audit cost of $142,000												
Support Services:												
Management & General	$	464	$	542	$	504	$	628	$	549	$	411
FTEs		5		5		5		6		6		3
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	$	510	$	599	$	853	$	833	$	752	$	752
FTEs		3		3		3		3		3		3
Fund Raising/Commun.	$	-	$	-	$	23	$	72	$	38	$	36
FTEs		-		-		1		1		1		1
Total Support Service $		974		1,141		1,380		1,533		1,339		1,199
Total Support Service FTEs		8		8		9		10		10		7
% of Total $		38.1%		45.0%		17.4%		19.5%		15.9%		14.0%
% of Total FTEs		36.4%		36.4%		15.3%		16.4%		15.2%		9.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	2,558	$	2,533	$	7,914	$	7,871	$	8,407	$	8,562
TOTAL FTEs		22		22		59		61		66		76
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	178	$	(31)	$	(77)	$	61	$	(542)	$	1,180

	December 31, 1997					December 31, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 796	-	-	-	796	$ 850	-	-	-	850
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	13	-	-	-	13	5	-	-	-	5
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	1,587	-	-	-	1,587	2,094			-	2,094
Equities	5,575	-	-	-	5,575	6,985			-	6,985
GICs	6,734	-	-	-	6,734	5,581			-	5,581
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-				-	
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	14,705	-	-	-	14,705	15,515	-	-	-	15,515
Accounts Payable	16	-	-	-	16	25	-	-	-	25
Forfeitures Due Agencies	211	-	-	-	211	179	-	-	-	179
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	227	-	-	-	227	204	-	-	-	204
Net Assets	$ 14,478	-	-	-	14,478	$ 15,311	-	-	-	15,311

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency:
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

Employees' Retirement Plan - U.S.

		1997 Actual		1998 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	$	-	$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	-	$	-
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Employer Conributiions	$	777	$	749
Grants	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	1,758	$	1,342
Total Other Income		2,535		2,091
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		2,535		2,091
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	$	1,744	$	1,190
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
Total Program Service $	$	1,744	$	1,190
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total $		97.5%		94.4%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	45	$	70
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		45		70
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total $		2.5%		5.6%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$	1,789	$	1,260
TOTAL FTEs		1		1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$	746	$	831

Agency: Fund for Smaller Churches
Balance Sheets (000s)

| | | June 30, 1997 | | | | | June 30, 1998 | | | |
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 346	-	-	-	346	$ 597	-	-	-	597
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-			-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	346	-	-	-	346	597	-	-	-	597
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	$ 346	-	-	-	346	$ 597	-	-	-	597

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency: **Fund for Smaller Churches**
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:						
Ministry Share	$ 275	$ 653	$ 675	$ 916	$ 913	$ 904
% of Total Income	88.1%	97.9%	99.3%	96.3%	98.9%	98.0%
Other Gift Income:						
Above Ministry Share	$ 12	$ 2	$ 2	$ 1	$ 1	3
Estate Gifts	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
Total Gift Income	12	2	2	1	1	3
% of Total Income	3.8%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
Other Income:						
Tuition & Sales	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
Grants	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
Miscellaneous	$ 25	$ 12	$ 3	$ 34	$ 9	15
Total Other Income	25	12	3	34	9	15
% of Total Income	8.0%	1.8%	0.4%	3.6%	1.0%	1.6%
TOTAL INCOME	312	667	680	951	923	922
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):						
Program Services:						
Subsidy Requests	$ 792	$ 803	$ 677	$ 750	$ 718	594
FTVolunteer(s)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Auto Reimbursements	$ 27	$ 58	$ 50	$ 54	$ 58	47
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moving Expenses	$ 12	$ 5	$ 7	$ 8	$ 14	14
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education	$ 6	$ 5	$ 4	$ 5	$ 5	4
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bienniel Conference	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service $	$ 837	$ 871	$ 738	$ 817	$ 795	659
Total Program Service FTEs	1	1	1	1	1	1
% of Total $	98.5%	98.9%	99.2%	98.6%	98.5%	98.2%
% of Total FTEs	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Support Services:						
Management & General	$ 13	$ 10	$ 6	$ 12	$ 12	12
FTVolunteer(s)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Plant Operations	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund Raising	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service $	13	10	6	12	12	12
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	1	1	1	1
% of Total $	1.5%	1.1%	0.8%	1.4%	1.5%	1.8%
% of Total FTEs	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$ 850	$ 881	$ 744	$ 829	$ 807	671
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	2	2	2	2
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	$ (538)	$ (214)	$ (64)	$ 122	$ 116	251

Agency: **Home Missions**
Balance Sheets (000s)

	June 30, 1997					June 30, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	S 1,640	-	16	489	2,145	S 3,051	3,098	16	519	6,684
CDs, Time Deposits	8	3,992	-	-	4,000	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Receivables & Advances	4,292	1,399	-	9	5,700	1,724	1,329	-	4	3,057
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	76	-	-	-	76	70	-	-	-	70
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-					
Equities	-	-	-	-	-					
Partnerships	-	2,557	178	-	2,735	-	2,995	-	-	2,995
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-					
PP & E	1,199	-	-	-	1,199	1,056	-	-	-	1,056
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	7,215	7,948	194	498	15,855	5,901	7,424	16	523	13,864
Accounts Payable	745	-	-	-	745	383	-	-	-	383
Notes/Loans Payable	218	1,503	-	-	1,721	212	1,071	-	-	1,283
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	178	-	178	216	-	-	-	216
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	963	1,503	178	-	2,644	811	1,071	-	-	1,882
Net Assets	S 6,252	6,445	16	498	13,211	S 5,090	6,353	16	523	11,982

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Virginia Beach, Arlington, Norfolk

Virginia Beach, Arlington, Poway

Note 2: List details of designations

Land:$3663 Loan:$4859 Endow:$1426 Hawaii:$1485
Trng:$660 RM: $128

Facility grants:$1,020; Endow: $1,650; Hawaii: $1,569; RM:$44
Training:$660; Loan: $1,410

Note 3: List details of restrictions

CGAs; NA Trng: $16

NA Trng: $16

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Loan:$456 NA Trn:$27 Trust:$15

Loan:$481 NA Trn:$27 Trust:$15

Agency: Home Missions
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:											
Ministry Share	$	5,483	$	5,408	$	4,481	$	5,310	$	5,292	$	5,307
% of Total Income		61.6%		60.2%		60.3%		64.5%		51.0%		65.8%
Other Gift Income:											
Above Ministry Share	$	1,909	$	1,693	$	1,309	$	1,474	$	1,701	$	1,712
Estate Gifts	$	160	$	478	$	73	$	272	$	313	$	212
Total Gift Income		2,069		2,171		1,382		1,746		2,014		1,924
% of Total Income		23.3%		24.2%		18.6%		21.2%		19.4%		23.9%
Other Income:											
Tuition & Sales	$	887	$	1,008	$	981	$	214	$	1,868	$	317
Grants	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–
Miscellaneous	$	457	$	399	$	592	$	960	$	1,204	$	513
Total Other Income		1,344		1,407		1,573		1,174		3,072		830
% of Total Income		15.1%		15.7%		21.2%		14.3%		29.6%		10.3%
TOTAL INCOME		8,896		8,986		7,436		8,230		10,378		8,061
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):											
Program Services:											
New-Church Development	$	5,185	$	5,369	$	4,934	$	4,867	$	4,717	$	4,888
FTEs		10		10		10		11		11		11
Established-Church Develop.	$	2,210	$	2,111	$	1,883	$	1,942	$	1,887	$	2,362
FTEs		18		17		16		19		19		19
Campus	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	74
FTEs		–		–		–		–		–		1
Total Program Service $	$	7,395	$	7,480	$	6,817	$	6,809	$	6,604	$	7,324
Total Program Service FTEs		28		27		27		30		30		31
% of Total $		86.7%		86.1%		86.9%		86.4%		85.9%		86.6%
% of Total FTEs		70.8%		71.2%		73.3%		78.5%		77.1%		82.9%
Support Services:											
Management & General	$	696	$	717	$	570	$	578	$	610	$	679
FTEs		7		7		5		5		5		2
Plant Operations	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–	$	–
FTEs		–		–		–		–		–		–
Fund Raising	$	437	$	494	$	457	$	493	$	476	$	457
FTEs		4		4		4		4		4		4
Total Support Service $		1,133		1,211		1,027		1,071		1,086		1,136
Total Support Service FTEs		11		11		10		8		9		6
% of Total $		13.3%		13.9%		13.1%		13.6%		14.1%		13.4%
% of Total FTEs		29.2%		28.8%		26.7%		21.5%		22.9%		17.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	8,528	$	8,691	$	7,844	$	7,880	$	7,690	$	8,460
TOTAL FTEs		39		38		36		39		39		37
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	368	$	295	$	(408)	$	350	$	2,688	$	(399)

Agency: **Loan Fund**
Balance Sheets (000s)

| | June 30, 1997 | | | | | June 30, 1998 | | | | |
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 1,501	-	-	-	1,501	$ 2,313	-	-	-	2,313
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	10,311	-	-	-	10,311	10,306	-	-	-	10,306
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-		-	-	-			-	-	-
Equities	-		-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	11,812	-	-	-	11,812	12,619	-	-	-	12,619
Accounts Payable	2	-	-	-	2	5	-	-	-	5
Notes/Loans Payable	8,625	-	-	-	8,625	9,297	-	-	-	9,297
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-		-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	8,627	-	-	-	8,627	9,302	-	-	-	9,302
Net Assets	$ 3,185	-	-	-	3,185	$ 3,317	-	-	-	3,317

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency: Loan Fund
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:						
Ministry Share	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:						
Above Ministry Share	$ 5	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Estate Gifts	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Gift Income	5	-	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:						
Tuition & Sales	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Grants	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Miscellaneous	$ 517	$ 582	$ 718	$ 750	$ 857	925
Total Other Income	517	582	718	750	857	925
% of Total Income	99.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME	522	582	718	750	857	925
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):						
Program Services:						
Loan Interest	$ 340	$ 370	$ 426	$ 437	$ 541	597
FTEs	2	2	2	2	2	2
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service $	$ 340	$ 370	$ 426	$ 437	$ 541	$ 597
Total Program Service FTEs	2	2	2	2	2	2
% of Total $	70.5%	71.7%	72.6%	71.2%	70.4%	75.3%
% of Total FTEs	46.7%	46.7%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Support Services:						
Management & General	$ 142	$ 146	$ 161	$ 177	$ 227	196
FTEs	2	2	2	2	2	2
Plant Operations	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund Raising	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service $	142	146	161	177	227	196
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	2	2	2	2
% of Total $	29.5%	28.3%	27.4%	28.8%	29.6%	24.7%
% of Total FTEs	53.3%	53.3%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$ 482	$ 516	$ 587	$ 614	$ 768	$ 793
TOTAL FTEs	4	4	4	4	4	4
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$ 40	$ 66	$ 131	$ 136	$ 89	$ 132

| | December 31, 1997 | | | | | December 31, 1998 | | | | |
	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ (268)	96	-	-	(172)	$ (209)	133	-	-	(76)
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	187	-	-	-	187	150	-	-	-	150
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	9,141	-	-	-	9,141	11,153		-	-	11,153
Equities	12,298	-	-	-	12,298	11,644		-	-	11,644
GICs	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	21,358	96	-	-	21,454	22,738	133	-	-	22,871
Accounts Payable	145	-	-	-	145	136	-	-	-	136
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	145	-	-	-	145	139	-	-	-	139
Net Assets	$ 21,213	96	-	-	21,309	$ 22,599	133	-	-	22,732

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency: Ministers' Pension and Special Assistance Funds - Canada
Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian $

		Pension Fund		Special Assistance Fund	
		1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1997 Actual	1998 Actual
ADDITIONS:					
Ministry Share	$	618 $	343 $	- $	37
% of Total Income		13.6%	12.3%	0.0%	88.1%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	$	- $	- $	- $	-
Estate Gifts	$	- $	- $	- $	-
Total Gift Income		-	-	-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:					
Participant Assessments	$	180 $	911 $	- $	-
Grants	$	- $	- $	- $	-
Miscellaneous	$	3,755 $	1,526 $	4 $	5
Total Other Income		3,935	2,437	4	5
% of Total Income		86.4%	87.7%	100.0%	11.9%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		4,553	2,780	4	42
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Distributions	$	1,088 $	1,164 $	24 $	5
FTEs		-	-	-	-
	$	- $	- $	- $	-
FTEs		-	-	-	-
	$	- $	- $	- $	-
FTEs		-	-	-	-
	$	- $	- $	- $	-
FTEs		-	-	-	-
	$	- $	- $	- $	-
FTEs		-	-	-	-
	$	- $	- $	- $	-
Total Program Service $	$	1,088 $	1,164 $	24 $	5
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-	-	-
% of Total $		89.0%	83.4%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:					
Management & General	$	135 $	231 $	- $	-
FTEs		1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	$	- $	- $	- $	-
FTEs		-	-	-	-
Fund Raising	$	- $	- $	- $	-
FTEs		-	-	-	-
Total Support Service $		135	231	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1	-	-
% of Total $		11.0%	16.6%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$	1,223 $	1,395 $	24 $	5
TOTAL FTEs		1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$	3,330 $	1,385 $	(20) $	37

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Ministers' Pension and Special Assistance Funds - U.S.

	December 31, 1997					December 31, 1998				
	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 2,294	143	-	-	2,437	$ 1,797	231	-	-	2,028
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	665	-	-	-	665	693	-	-	-	693
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	31,620	-	-	-	31,620	31,760		-	-	31,760
Equities	48,719	-	-	-	48,719	58,067		-	-	58,067
GICs	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	83,298	143	-	-	83,441	92,337	231	-	-	92,568
Accounts Payable	113	3	-	-	116	97	13	-	-	110
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	1	-	-	-	1					-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	114	3	-	-	117	97	13	-	-	110
Net Assets	$ 83,184	140	-	-	83,324	$ 92,240	218	-	-	92,458

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Agency:
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

Ministers' Pension and Special Assistance Funds - U.S.

	Pension Fund		Special Assistance Fund	
	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1997 Actual	1998 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	$ 1,498 $	451 $	- $	159
% of Total Income	8.5%	3.3%	0.0%	94.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$ - $	- $	- $	-
Estate Gifts	$ - $	- $	- $	-
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	$ 710 $	2,472 $	- $	-
Grants	$ - $	- $	- $	-
Miscellaneous	$ 15,456 $	10,850 $	8 $	9
Total Other Income	16,166	13,322	8	9
% of Total Income	91.5%	96.7%	100.0%	5.4%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	17,664	13,773	8	168
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	$ 4,165 $	4,183 $	16 $	90
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ - $	- $	- $	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ - $	- $	- $	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ - $	- $	- $	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ - $	- $	- $	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ - $	- $	- $	-
Total Program Service $	$ 4,165 $	4,183 $	16 $	90
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total $	91.0%	88.7%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	$ 414 $	534 $	- $	-
FTEs	2	2	-	-
Plant Operations	$ - $	- $	- $	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund Raising	$ - $	- $	- $	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service $	414	534	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	-	-
% of Total $	9.0%	11.3%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$ 4,579 $	4,717 $	16 $	90
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$ 13,085 $	9,056 $	(8) $	78

Agency: **World Missions**
Balance Sheets (000s)

| | June 30, 1997 | | | | | June 30, 1998 | | | | |
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 1,499	243	153	2	1,897	$ 1,710	132	89	3	1,934
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	300	821	-	60	1,181
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	136	55	-	4	195	187	49	-	8	244
Inventory	372	-	-	-	372	378	-	-	-	378
Prepaids & Advances	18	-	-	-	18	10	-	-	-	10
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	590	4,007	-	315	4,912	320	3,947	-	455	4,722
Equities	253	1,847	-	138	2,238	193	2,379	-	349	2,921
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-			-	-
Property (non-operating)	158	-	-	-	158	131		70	-	201
PP & E	306	-	-	-	306	298	-	-	-	298
Other	142	-	-	-	142	129	-	-	-	129
Total Assets	3,474	6,152	153	459	10,238	3,656	7,328	159	875	12,018
Accounts Payable	570	87	-	-	657	428	100	-	-	528
Notes/Loans Payable	149	-	-	-	149	136	-	-	-	136
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	448	-	-	-	448	444	-	-	-	444
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,010	-	-	-	1,010	989	-	-	-	989
Total Liabilities	2,177	87	-	-	2,264	1,997	100	-	-	2,097
Net Assets	$ 1,297	6,065	153	459	7,974	$ 1,659	7,228	159	875	9,921

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Land contract given in legacy

Land contract given in legacy $131 - Restricted Land Gift $70

Note 2: List details of designations

Japan Capital Funds $3,909 - Legacy Fund $564 - Insurance Reserve Funds $876 - Endowment/Annuities $408 - Other $395

Japan Capital Funds $4,335 - Legacy Fund $827 - Insurance Reserve Funds $751 - Endowment/Annuities $485 - Other $830

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Restricted Gifts $153

Restricted Gifts $89

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Endowments

Endowments

Agency: World Missions
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

		Fiscal 92-93 Actual		Fiscal 93-94 Actual		Fiscal 94-95 Actual		Fiscal 95-96 Actual		Fiscal 96-97 Actual		Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:												
Ministry Share	$	5,108	$	4,345	$	4,916	$	5,086	$	5,052	$	5,070
% of Total Income		33.1%		40.6%		39.4%		39.2%		38.1%		36.4%
Other Gift Income:												
Above Ministry Share	$	4,947	$	3,882	$	4,332	$	4,933	$	4,975	$	5,188
Estate Gifts	$	1,519	$	534	$	328	$	410	$	309	$	844
Total Gift Income		6,466		4,416		4,660		5,343		5,284		6,032
% of Total Income		41.9%		41.3%		37.3%		41.2%		39.9%		43.3%
Other Income:												
Tuition & Sales	$	2,360	$	851	$	1,314	$	929	$	972	$	1,060
Grants	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	1,497	$	1,082	$	1,599	$	1,621	$	1,950	$	1,774
Total Other Income		3,857		1,933		2,913		2,550		2,922		2,834
% of Total Income		25.0%		18.1%		23.3%		19.6%		22.0%		20.3%
TOTAL INCOME		15,431		10,694		12,489		12,979		13,258		13,936
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):												
Program Services:												
Africa	$	2,693	$	2,198	$	3,125	$	2,681	$	2,919	$	2,992
FTEs		71		73		72		72		73		70
Asia	$	4,148	$	4,121	$	5,415	$	4,426	$	4,053	$	3,743
FTEs		65		66		66		67		63		64
Latin America	$	3,266	$	2,817	$	3,170	$	3,251	$	3,347	$	3,173
FTEs		71		71		75		70		72		70
Europe	$	319	$	232	$	416	$	479	$	466	$	498
FTEs		14		15		20		23		23		20
Education	$	369	$	303	$	338	$	408	$	399	$	407
FTEs		4		4		5		4		4		4
	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
		-		-		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	10,795	$	9,671	$	12,464	$	11,245	$	11,184	$	10,813
Total Program Service FTEs		225		229		237		235		234		228
% of Total $		89.1%		89.2%		89.6%		88.4%		88.3%		87.3%
% of Total FTEs		91.5%		91.7%		91.5%		91.9%		91.6%		91.9%
Support Services:												
Management & General	$	682	$	611	$	768	$	813	$	851	$	929
FTEs		13		13		13		12		13		12
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-		-		-
Fund Raising	$	635	$	559	$	682	$	669	$	637	$	640
FTEs		8		8		9		8		9		8
Total Support Service $		1,317		1,170		1,450		1,482		1,488		1,569
Total Support Service FTEs		21		21		22		21		21		20
% of Total $		10.9%		10.8%		10.4%		11.6%		11.7%		12.7%
% of Total FTEs		8.5%		8.3%		8.5%		8.1%		8.4%		8.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	12,112	$	10,841	$	13,914	$	12,727	$	12,672	$	12,382
TOTAL FTEs		245		250		259		256		255		247
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	3,319	$	(147)	$	(1,425)	$	252	$	586	$	1,554

Agency: Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheets (000s)

	June 30, 1997					June 30, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 48	$ 663	$ -	$ -	711	$ 570	1,329	259	-	2,158
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	878	-	-	-	878	645		-	-	645
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	408	-	25	-	433	204	-		-	204
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	176	204	23	403	46	364	-	23	433
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	32	-	-	32	-	32	-	-	32
PP & E	101	-	139	-	240	129	-	137	-	266
Other	9	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,444	871	368	23	2,706	1,594	1,725	396	23	3,738
Accounts Payable	396	-	-	-	396	252	-	-	-	252
Notes/Loans Payable	37	-	-	-	37	30	-	-	-	30
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	186	-	186	185	-	-	-	185
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	433	-	186	-	619	467	-	-	-	467
Net Assets	$ 1,011	871	182	23	2,087	$ 1,127	1,725	396	23	3,271

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Lot on Cascade Road	Lot on Cascade Road-currently for sale

Note 2: List details of designations

7-year term endowments as stipulated by Board = $964	7-year term endowments = $1,491(Joseph Fund)
Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = $93	Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = $234

Note 3: List details of restrictions

Mission home = $139 Gift rec'd for 97/98 programs = $25	Mission home=$137 Gifts with purpose restr=$159
Christ Mem'l gift = $18, CGAs: $186	Gifts with time restr=$100

Note 4: List details of restrictions

Pure endowments	Pure endowments

Agency: **Christian Reformed World Relief Committee**
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 92-93 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual
INCOME:						
Ministry Share	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:						
Above Ministry Share	$ 8,878	$ 6,915	$ 7,364	$ 7,022	$ 8,581	$ 8,185
Estate Gifts	$ 296	$ 507	$ 273	$ 692	$ 176	$ 895
Total Gift Income	9,174	7,422	7,637	7,714	8,757	9,080
% of Total Income	87.6%	90.9%	80.2%	80.5%	79.2%	81.7%
Other Income:						
Tuition & Sales	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Grants	$ 1,329	$ 649	$ 1,791	$ 1,454	$ 2,160	$ 1,926
Miscellaneous	$ (35)	$ 90	$ 97	$ 409	$ 139	107
Total Other Income	1,294	739	1,888	1,863	2,299	2,033
% of Total Income	12.4%	9.1%	19.8%	19.5%	20.8%	18.3%
TOTAL INCOME	10,468	8,161	9,525	9,577	11,056	11,113
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):						
Program Services:						
Overseas programs	$ 5,432	$ 4,312	$ 5,906	$ 5,488	$ 5,548	$ 5,000
FTEs	49	44	46	58	47	36
No America programs	$ 611	$ 917	$ 1,246	$ 918	$ 815	$ 778
FTEs	8	9	12	11	11	10
Disaster relief programs	$ 1,457	$ 1,288	$ 1,984	$ 938	$ 1,674	$ 1,822
FTEs	3	4	4	5	5	5
Education	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 243	$ 190	$ 94
FTEs	-	-	-	1	1	1
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	-	-	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service $	$ 7,500	$ 6,517	$ 9,136	$ 7,587	$ 8,227	$ 7,694
Total Program Service FTEs	60	57	62	75	64	52
% of Total $	82.5%	81.4%	81.6%	80.5%	81.1%	77.5%
% of Total FTEs	77.9%	74.0%	75.6%	78.9%	75.3%	72.2%
Support Services:						
Management & General	$ 834	$ 750	$ 1,058	$ 968	$ 932	$ 1,183
FTEs	11	10	11	11	11	10
Plant Operations	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund Raising	$ 762	$ 743	$ 998	$ 875	$ 983	$ 1,053
FTEs	6	10	9	9	10	10
Total Support Service $	1,596	1,493	2,056	1,843	1,915	2,236
Total Support Service FTEs	17	20	20	20	21	20
% of Total $	17.5%	18.6%	18.4%	19.5%	18.9%	22.5%
% of Total FTEs	22.1%	26.0%	24.4%	21.1%	24.7%	27.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$ 9,096	$ 8,010	$ 11,192	$ 9,430	$ 10,142	$ 9,930
TOTAL FTEs	77	77	82	95	85	72
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$ 1,372	$ 151	$ (1,667)	$ 147	$ 914	$ 1,183

REPORTS OF AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church is pleased to present a unified report on the ministries conducted by the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. For the sake of convenience, the reports that follow are arranged in alphabetical order by agency or institutional name. The time period covered in these reports is July 1, 1998, to March 1, 1999. Information generated subsequent to this report will be included, if necessary, in the Board of Trustees' supplementary report to synod. Such supplementary material is expected to be minimal even though Home Missions and World Missions do not have their annual meetings until April and May respectively. Both Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary have significant agenda material for their May 1999 board meetings. Each of these institutions will be presenting its recommendations to synod by way of its own supplementary report.

It should be noted that the reports that follow contain only limited financial information. Specifically included are the summary budget and balance sheets of the agencies and institutions (see Appendix F of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA report). The inclusion of this material was specifically mandated by Synod 1998. More detailed budget and financial information will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The most important content of these reports, however, is their review of the blessings and challenges the Christian Reformed Church faces in its collective global ministries. In education, missions, relief and development, publishing, and a variety of other areas, the Christian Reformed Church is made up of a people most blessed. It is a privilege to be about the Lord's work, and it is a sign of vitality that God's people support these ministries to the extent they do. The Lord is faithful in motivating, equipping, encouraging, and challenging us to even greater service. Those of us who serve the church in the denominational context are conscious of the trust that past synods have placed in us and of the privilege it is to serve God's kingdom through the Christian Reformed Church. It is our sincere prayer and hope that all the efforts of denominational representatives around the world may be abundantly blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, too, we pray for Synod 1999.

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I. Introduction

God sends his people into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Back to God Hour is a vital component of the church's proclamation ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

The board and staff of The Back to God Hour serve the church and the world in light of the mandate which synod has established. Among other things, that mandate requires The Back to God Hour to

> give leadership in media missions and to supervise the production of denominational radio, television, and other electronic programs which express the Reformed faith in response to man's need for conversion, edification, and cultural direction . . . and it is required to give leadership to the denomination as a whole and its congregations in the use of available communication media.

II. Board of trustees

A. Function

The Back to God Hour is governed by a regionally representative board which meets three times a year to set policy and evaluate the work of the staff.

B. Officers of the board

The officers of the board are Rev. Henry Kranenburg, president; Rev. Harlan Vanden Einde, vice president; Dr. Robert Huizenga, secretary; and Mr. Keith Oosthoek, treasurer.

C. Nominations for board members

1. Central U.S. II (three-year term)

   Rev. Allen Petroelje is pastor of First CRC, Fremont, Michigan, where he has served since 1996. He formerly served churches in Indiana, Washington, Montana, and Michigan. He serves as regional pastor for Classis Muskegon. He previously served on the Calvin College Board of Trustees, and he has served in various classical capacities.

   Rev. Terry Slachter is pastor of Dearborn CRC, Dearborn, Michigan. He has served there since 1996 and formerly served churches in Indiana and Michigan. He is a member of the classical home-missions committee of Classis Lake Erie. He has served on the Student Fund Committee and was prayer coordinator for Classis Illiana.

2. Central U.S. III (three-year term)

   Mrs. Willa Beckman is a member of Park CRC, Holland, Michigan. She has been active in GEMS (Calvinettes) leadership, and she is serving her second term as a board member of Holland Christian Schools.

   Mr. Gordon Grevengoed is a member of Faith CRC, Holland, Michigan, where he currently serves as elder. A retired chief executive officer of AmeriBank, he currently serves on the board of directors of Ottawa Financial Corporation. He has been a board member for Holland Christian Schools.

3. Central U.S. IV (three-year term)
    Rev. R. Scott Greenway is pastor of Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, Michigan, where he has served since 1995. He formerly served Irving Park CRC in Midland Park, New Jersey.
    Rev. Gerald Zandstra is pastor of Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served since 1993. He formerly served Midland Park CRC, Midland Park, New Jersey.

4. Eastern Canada II (three-year term)
    Mrs. Marjanne Meyer is a member of First CRC, Montreal, Quebec, where she has served in many capacities and is currently Sunday-school superintendent. She has also served as chairperson of the local Christian-school board. She is employed as director of contract packaging with Algroup Wheaton, Margo Division.
    Mr. John Schievink is a member of Rehoboth CRC, Bowmanville, Ontario, where he is currently serving as elder and pastor-care coordinator. He is a retired school teacher, and he previously served on the board of governors for Redeemer College.

5. Eastern Canada II (one-year term)
    Rev. Bernard Bakker is pastor of Hebron CRC in Whitby, Ontario, where he has served since 1992. He is regional pastor for Classis Quinte. He previously served churches in Nova Scotia and Ontario.
    Rev. Adrian Van Giessen serves as new-church developer in Ajax, Ontario. Ordained in 1986, he previously served churches in British Columbia and Ontario. As church developer, Rev. Van Giessen has partnered with The Back to God Hour to produce radio spots in advertising the church's ministry to the community.

The following two nominees (incumbents) are completing their first terms on the board, and their names are being presented to synod for ratification of appointment to second three-year terms.

6. Far West U.S. I (three-year term)
    Rev. Anthony Begay is pastor of Southwest Campus Christian Fellowship, which serves the University of New Mexico, Technical Vocational Institute, and Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute. Previously he served a church in New Mexico and as an army chaplain.

7. Great Plains (three-year term)
    Mr. John Slegers is a member of Calvary CRC in Orange City, Iowa, where he has served on the church council. He is news director of KDCR, Dordt College Radio, and has also worked with other radio stations in Northwest Iowa. He is a graduate of Dordt College with a major in communications.

D. *Salary disclosure*
    The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd quartile
17	1	midpoint

III. Back to God Hour ministries

The Back to God Hour proclaims God's Word in nine languages, using radio, television, telephone, and the Internet. Its commitment to presenting the gospel to those who do not know Jesus as Savior is reflected in its programming content and in its decision to use secular stations to air its programs whenever possible.

People respond to the presentation of the gospel. Some object to the claims of Jesus; others want to know more about him and how to serve him. Trained volunteers and staff persons answer the telephone and read the mail that comes from listeners, responding appropriately to questions and suggestions generated by the ministry. Back to God Hour representatives supply literature, help people find church homes, refer people to Christian counselors, and pray with and for people. They distribute prayer requests to a network of prayer partners who covenant to pray regularly.

A. English-language ministry

1. "The Back to God Hour" is a weekly half-hour radio program heard on every continent in the world. On this program Rev. David Feddes continues to proclaim the historic Christian faith to contemporary society.

2. The English-language television ministry of The Back to God Hour has been in transition. "Faith 20," which was viewed this past year only in Canada, was replaced in the spring of 1999 by a news/magazine-format program called "Primary Focus." As this *Agenda* went to press, negotiations were taking place for placement of this program in the United States. This program will be tied to local congregations and will utilize second- and third-tier television stations in the U.S.

3. "Insight," a four-and-one-half-minute radio commentary heard weekdays on approximately eighty stations, is hosted by Dr. Joel Nederhood, who, although retired, has consented to this assignment.

4. The Voice of Life radio station, located on the island of Dominica, covers the eastern Caribbean islands and carries all of our English programs as well as a radio version of "Faith 20."

5. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over 400,000 copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional), over 35,000 printed copies of *The Radio Pulpit*, and printed transcripts of "Insight" and "Faith 20."

6. In 1999 The Back to God Hour is introducing a fifteen-minute program featuring readings by Dr. James C. Schaap. This program uses stories to introduce a Reformed world-and-life viewpoint.

7. Significant work is taking place toward the production of an animated television special scheduled to be aired during the Easter season of 2001. The preliminary work of story and script writing has begun. The intended audience is children and families.

B. Arabic-language ministry

The Arabic ministry continues with the use of undated previously recorded messages. Listener response is somewhat sporadic, especially from those areas

in which there is much tension and conflict. This past year was spent in the search for a new minister of Arabic broadcasting and in discussions regarding possible joint ministry with other ministries engaged in broadcasting.

C. Chinese-language ministry

Back to God Hour broadcasts in Cantonese and Mandarin cover all twenty-six provinces in China, which is home to over 1.1 billion people. These broadcasts are aired on seven superpower stations located outside the country.

In China, listener follow-up is difficult because of government-imposed restrictions. Presently the Alliance Radio staff in Hong Kong works with The Back to God Hour in follow-up and listener contact. Hong Kong's 1997 reversion to rule by China has not adversely affected ministry to this point.

This past year a significant expansion of the Chinese ministry took place because of a change in governmental regulations concerning media in New Zealand. As a result of alliances with local congregations, Back to God Hour Chinese programs are heard in major metropolitan areas in New Zealand with limited cost to the agency.

Significant Chinese-language ministry also takes place in some major metropolitan areas in Canada, the United States, and Panama where concentrations of Chinese-speaking persons are found. In some of these areas our programming is bilingual.

Please pray for Rev. Jimmy Lin as he gives direction to this crucial ministry.

D. French-language ministry

The Back to God Hour Board made a decision in 1996 to focus the French-language ministry on Africa. Rev. Paul M'Pindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo and a Ph.D. student at Calvin Seminary, was appointed in October 1997 to give leadership to this ministry. He has been working part-time for the past year. He plans to begin full-time work for The Back to God Hour in May 1999. One of the most crucial decisions for 1999 concerns where to locate the French-language office. Our preference is for a location in a French-speaking African nation that has political and economic stability.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

This year has also seen much uncertainty in Indonesia. The instability of the Indonesian currency and the economic crisis that affects all the Pacific Rim countries also affect this ministry. In addition, the political instability has been the occasion for persecution of Christians by some Muslims. Over five hundred churches have been burned in the last year.

Indonesia, an island nation having the largest Muslim population in the world, is home to Dr. Junus Atmarumeksa, whose media ministry covers that country. This ministry encourages Christians who live under oppression, announces a Savior to those outside Jesus Christ, and proclaims hope to the downcast and oppressed.

Dr. Atmarumeksa intends to retire within the next three years. A process is underway, in conjunction with the church in Indonesia, to identify and recruit a successor to Dr. Atmarumeksa.

F. Japanese-language ministry

In the summer of 1998 Rev. Masao Yamashita succeeded Rev. Shijoro Ishii in giving leadership to the electronic-media ministry in the Japanese language.

Radio is an excellent ministry medium among a people who have been resistant to the gospel. Radio allows a person to listen to the gospel in private, without risking the loss of face that a more public listening to the gospel might entail. The recent addition of an Internet site to this ministry has proved a valuable adjunct to the other ministry tools. The Internet allows persons to get information about the Christian faith in a quiet, unobtrusive way. Many Japanese have taken advantage of this opportunity to learn more about Jesus. As economic uncertainty rises and the influence of traditional religion wanes, the opportunities for the gospel grow in Japanese society.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

Radio, television, and telephone are all-important parts of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil sustains a high level of interest and is a significant partner in this ministry. This has been evidenced in the number of local congregations that underwrite part of the broadcasting costs or have leased telephone equipment to assist in the follow-up ministry. In the past year this ministry moved toward a more formal relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. We thank God for the desire of the broader assembly to become involved in this ministry.

H. Russian-language ministry

The Back to God Hour ministry to the Commonwealth of Independent States is part of a coordinated effort of Christian Reformed agencies to minister in this area of the world.

Mr. Serguei Sossedkine serves as the speaker for the Russian-language broadcast. Mr. Sossedkine, a native of Moscow and a graduate of Reformed Bible College, is presently a student at Calvin Seminary. He translates and adapts sermons written by Rev. David Feddes for broadcast to Russia.

The change in Russian law, which has the potential for greatly restricting evangelism, has yet to be felt by The Back to God Hour. To this point we have been able to carry on our ministry through a variety of local stations in select metropolitan areas. However, we continue to be much in prayer, for we do not know the full impact the change in law will have until an enforcement pattern emerges.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Nearly 250 radio stations and thirty television stations carry Back to God Hour Spanish-language programming. This ministry reaches Central, North, and South America, as well as Spain. Work continues on expanding the media ministry, especially the television ministry. The radio ministry features multiple formats to speak to a variety of different kinds of audiences. Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership in this ministry.

Work progresses on a telephone ministry parallel to that being provided in the Portuguese language in Brazil. This pilot project for 1999-2000 will be evaluated for its effectiveness in Spanish-speaking areas.

J. Cooperative organizations

1. The Back to God Hour works closely with AdMark, an advertising agency, and RACOM, the public-relations agency dedicated to support the ministry of The Back to God Hour.

2. The Back to God Hour contracts with CRC Publications for publication of selected materials.

3. The Back to God Hour and Christian Reformed Home Missions are working together to raise the visibility of certain new church plants through the use of media.

4. The Back to God Hour is an active partner, along with others, including Christian Reformed World Literature Ministries, in the publication of Calvin's *Institutes* in the Russian language.

5. The Back to God Hour, in partnership with Crossroad Bible Institute, provides a correspondence program as part of a follow-up ministry.

6. The Back to God Hour cooperated in a joint venture with VISION television and with the Electronic Media Committee of the Canadian Ministries Board to produce a series of programs showing a Christian response to poverty.

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Henry Kranenburg, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, director of ministries, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

B. That synod elect board members from the nominations presented and ratify second-term appointments for two incumbents..

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The Back to God Hour
John Kuyers, executive director

</div>

I. Introduction

This report reflects information about and actions taken at the October 1998 and the February 1999 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

In October the board met at the Yarrow Conference Center in Augusta, Michigan, for its fall meeting/retreat. In addition to its regular business, the board heard presentations on diversity issues led by Mr. Robert Woodrick, chief executive officer of D & W, a local grocery chain, and Dr. William Pannell, dean of the chapel and professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. A second series of presentations, led by Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, and Rev. John L. Witvliet, addressed the relationship between Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church.

The officers elected for 1998-1999 are Mrs. Sheri Haan (chair), Mr. Milton Kuyers (vice chair), Rev. Edward Blankespoor (secretary), Mrs. Carol Smith (assistant secretary), and Dr. James Kraai (treasurer).

II. General college matters

A. *Joint venture with CR Home Missions' Campus Ministries*

Approval was given to create a faculty lecture series to be given each year at L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland and at two university sites in North America. A Calvin College University Lecturer will be selected each year. This person will prepare and deliver a series of lectures on the power of a Reformed Christian worldview for either an academic discipline or a significant contemporary problem.

B. *Semester in China program*

The board approved Calvin's new Semester in China program, slated to begin in the fall of 1999, and heard a report on off-campus programs from Dr. Frank Roberts, director of off-campus programs for Calvin. Roberts noted the dramatic increase in the number of off-campus programs and the number of students participating over the last two decades. He also noted that Calvin ranks high nationally for number of students who study abroad. One of the goals of Calvin's "Five-Year Plan, 1997-2002," namely that more than half of Calvin's students will have had an off-campus experience by the time they graduate, will be met ahead of schedule.

C. *Staff*

1. Robert A. Berkhof, B.A., was appointed to replace Cheryl Nielsen as vice president for development (see Recommendations below).

2. Following the resignation of Jeanette De Jong and after a nationwide search, Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra, J.D., was appointed vice president for student life (see Recommendations below).

3. Other appointments

   a. Tenure interviews were the highlight of the February meeting; the board approved seven reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations below).

    b. The board also ratified fifteen new faculty appointments and reappointments without tenure. Nine faculty members were granted sabbatical leaves, and nineteen received Calvin Research Fellowships.

4. Dr. Mary Ann Walters, professor of English, was presented the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. This award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian attitudes are readily apparent in exemplary teaching in the classroom. In addition, a cash award is provided to be used for educational opportunities and life experiences that will enrich the recipient's career.

D. Finance

    The board approved a budget of approximately $59 million for 1999-2000. Tuition for 1999-2000 was set at $13,420. Room and board for 1999-2000 will be $4,680. These figures represent a 3.9 percent increase in both tuition and room and board over 1998-1999.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod ratify the following new administrative appointments:

1. Robert A. Berkhof, B.A., Vice President for Development for two years.
2. Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra, J.D., Vice President for Student Life for three years.

B. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure:

1. Randall J. Brouwer, Ph.D., Professor of Engineering.
2. Janel Curry-Roper, Ph.D., Professor of Geology, Geography, and Environmental Studies.
3. Susan Felch, Ph.D., Professor of English.
4. Debra Freeberg, Ph.D., Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences.
5. Arie Griffioen, Ph.D., Professor of Religion and Theology.
6. Frank Speyers, M.S., Professor of Art.
7. Ralph Stearley, Ph.D., Professor of Geology.

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Calvin College Board of Trustees
    Edward J. Blankespoor, secretary

</div>

I. Introduction

The seminary board of trustees gratefully reports to synod that God is blessing our school with another good year. We are experiencing a record enrollment of resident students, staff transitions are going smoothly, finances are more encouraging than five years ago, a number of new projects and programs have been added, and this year we are especially gratified to report that the number of candidates for ministry has improved markedly from the last several years. For all these blessings we thank God and give him the honor and the glory.

The board has asked that Rev. Joel Boot (board chairman) and Mr. Mark Muller (secretary) represent the seminary at synod (see Recommendation A).

II. Highlights

Noteworthy are the following developments at the seminary:

A. Continuing attention to the seminary's strategic plan, approved in 1997, and coordination of the seminary plan with the denominational plan, approved by synod the same year.

B. Initiation of focus groups to assist the faculty and board in the evaluation of the M.Div. curriculum and the implementation of an urban-studies requirement in both the M.Div. and the M.A. curricula. These efforts will continue through the spring and summer and into next fall.

C. Collaboration with Christian Reformed Home Missions in retooling the M.A. in missions and church growth to make the degree program more useful in training new church developers. The changes will affect degree candidates as well as other students who are in a certificate program. The staffs of Home Missions and the seminary worked creatively through the summer and fall in designing these changes.

D. Implementation of the "Facing Your Future" program for thirty-five high school juniors and seniors of exceptional ability and interest in ministry. The program is funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. and will run for three years. It includes a month of stimulating educational and ministry experiences on our campus and in Israel. If the program is successful, the seminary will attempt to raise endowments to make it a permanent program.

E. Continuing work on instructional technology and the implementation of computerized delivery systems for regular courses and for continuing education. Costs for these efforts are substantially underwritten by another grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc.

F. Establishment of the H.J. Kuiper Chair in Philosophical and Moral Theology, funded by an endowment being established by Mr. Edsko and Mrs. Claire Hekman. Mrs. Hekman is the daughter of Rev. Kuiper, who was editor of *The Banner* from 1928 to 1956. This is the third endowed professorship in the seminary's successful Ph.D. program. The board is deeply grateful to the Hekmans for this wonderful gift.

G. The retirement of Dr. Harry Boonstra as theological librarian, effective this summer.

H. The declaration of a vacancy in the field of domestic missiology and authorization of the faculty to initiate a search to fill this vacancy.

I. Approval of thirteen part-time teaching appointments for 1999-2000.

J. Successful completion of the search process for an appointment in systematic theology. A total of sixty-seven persons were considered and contacted. Five finalists were interviewed by the search committee, two by the faculty. The board interviewed and appointed Dr. Lyle D. Bierma, who will be interviewed by synod for its ratification of his appointment.

K. The board's decision to eliminate its informal restriction that members on its executive committee must live within 350 miles of the seminary.

III. Board of trustees

The board is composed of sixteen regional trustees and three members-at-large. The board met in full sessions on February 11-12, 1999, and is scheduled to meet again on May 20-21, 1999. The executive committee of nine persons met in September, November, and January and will meet again in April. The board officers are

> Rev. Joel Boot, chair
> Rev. Norman Meyer, vice chair
> Mr. Mark Muller, secretary
> Mr. Philip Vanden Berge, treasurer (nonvoting)

A complete listing of current trustees and alternates, with the expiration dates of their terms, appears on page 447 of the *Acts of Synod 1998.* (Rev. A. Lindemulder has replaced Rev. D. Klompeen, who moved out of the region he was representing.) Regular trustees are also listed on page 2 of each issue of *Calvin Seminary in Focus* and in the seminary catalog.

It is significant that the seminary board has nine new members this year, seven of them because of the expiration of their predecessors' second terms and two because their predecessors (regional trustees) moved out of the areas they were representing. A thorough orientation of new trustees was conducted by the seminary president and board chairperson at the February meetings. The February session of the board proceeded smoothly.

In February the board mandated the administration and faculty to present a plan in May for the proper recognition and celebration of Calvin Theological Seminary's 125th anniversary in March 2001. It also noted that the executive committee has directed the administration to initiate a comprehensive, long-range review of the seminary's facilities needs. Reports and recommendations on both matters are expected in May.

The board prepared and submitted trustee nominations, in most cases from names submitted by classes, to the general secretary for distribution to the classes in the regions where elections are required in 1999. There are no at-large openings on the board this year.

The board authorized its chairman and the seminary president to select retired ministers, as needed, to assist with processing candidates. Usually

these are people who have served on the board in prior years and who understand the candidacy process.

The board's secretary mailed reports of the May 1998 and the February 1999 board meetings to the clerks of all classes and of all congregations. The seminary administration periodically prepares information to be included in the mailings sent to classes with news on all CRC agencies.

IV. Faculty and staff

A. Faculty activities

The seminary faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Its major efforts are devoted to effective teaching in its six degree programs. Pedagogical effectiveness has been greatly enhanced in this decade by a program of individualized instruction in effective teaching and by the intentional use of computer technology.

A number of faculty are engaged in research projects that will enrich teaching and yield publications. These projects are made possible by outside grants and by awards from the Faculty Heritage Endowment Fund. Some give or respond to papers at academic conferences. This year Dr. Richard Muller is using a sabbatical to lecture at the University of Utrecht, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra is using his to teach at seminaries in Nigeria and the Philippines. Dr. Melvin Hugen, who retired last year, and Dr. Robert De Vries are collaborating with the faculty of the Reformed seminary in Aix en Provence, France, with support from World Missions, in developing a church-education curriculum for French-speaking countries throughout the world.

The faculty members also serve the churches as frequent speakers at conferences, mission-emphasis events, officers' training workshops, and continuing-education events. Often they are invited to preach and lead adult-education sessions. The faculty is much in demand as advisers and consultants to our denominational agencies.

Stewards of the Word is a seminary publication that first appeared in December 1998. It is a statement of the faculty's philosophy of theological education, produced through faculty deliberations and written by Dr. John Bolt. Dr. De Vries and his wife have written a significant book on dealing with grief over the loss of a spouse. Dr. Ronald Nydam has a book on adoption in press. The seminary subsidized both the forthcoming publication on the Heidelberg Catechism by emeritus professor Dr. Fred Klooster and the translation of Calvin's *Institutes* into Russian, a project of Christian Reformed World Literature Ministries. This summer the second volume of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* will appear in translation by the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, an effort involving professors Bolt, De Jong, and Muller. Books edited by Karin Maag, director of the Meeter Center, have enhanced our understanding of the Reformation period. Additionally, the *Calvin Seminary Forum* and the *Calvin Theological Journal* continue to receive encouragement and praise from many quarters. Through these and many other avenues the Calvin Seminary faculty gives theological leadership far beyond CRC circles and out of proportion to its size.

B. Reappointments

The board presents several faculty and staff reappointments to synod for ratification. These actions are based on a thorough review of each appointee's

service. In the case of professors, an advance in rank is indicated in italics (see Recommendation B).

> Dr. Gary J. Bekker, as Academic Dean and Professor of Church Education and Missiology for four years, 1999-2003.
>
> Rev. Carl Bosma, as Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years, 1999-2001, with the stipulation that he be granted permanent tenure and be promoted to the rank of full professor upon receiving his doctor's degree.
>
> Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima, as *Professor* of New Testament with permanent tenure.
>
> Mr. Philip Vanden Berge, as Chief Financial Officer for four years, 1999-2003.
>
> Dr. Bastian Van Elderen, as Adjunct Professor of New Testament for three years, 1999-2002.

C. New appointment in systematic theology

The board presents Dr. Lyle D. Bierma for synodical interview and for ratification of his appointment as Professor of Systematic Theology for three years (1999-2002). Background materials will be presented to the delegates at synod.

For the systematic theology opening, suggestions were solicited and received from churches, individuals, trustees, and faculty members. Those suggested were invited to submit materials, which were carefully reviewed by the search committee. Both the faculty and board conducted interviews. Our prayer is that Dr. Bierma will be a source of much blessing to the churches and the seminary students (see Recommendation C).

D. Retirement of theological librarian

With gratitude to God for his years of faithful service and effective teaching, the board calls synod's attention to the retirement of Dr. Harry Boonstra. Dr. Boonstra is completing his tenth year on the faculty as theological librarian and associate director of the Hekman Library. The board recommends that he be granted the title of Theological Librarian Emeritus (see Recommendation D).

V. Other matters

A. The board approved a provisional budget for 1999-2000 of $4,274,470, a 4.2 percent increase over last year. This budget is balanced, and it is based on a 5 percent tuition increase and a 3 percent increase in the salary base. The budget will be reviewed and adjusted for final adoption in May. It has been reviewed by the Ministries Coordinating Council and a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. Financial recommendations will come to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement.*

B. Salary disclosure

The board presents the following salary information for 1999 (U.S. salary ranges).

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	4th quartile
16	1	4th quartile
16	2	3rd quartile
14	2	4th quartile
14	1	3rd quartile
14	1	2nd quartile

C. In accordance with the arrangements made by synod, the seminary has collaborated with Christian Reformed World Missions in administering the resources of the Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad (CEACA), which was disbanded by synod several years ago. The seminary in 1998-1999 is using the $53,000 in estimated ministry-share revenue and $12,000 in expendable endowment earnings toward the $174,000 budget for the international-student subsidy fund. This fund is supporting the following students this year:

Mr. Daniel Bud, M.T.S. program	Romania
Mrs. Felicia Bud, M.A. program	Romania
Mr. Benjamin Galan, Th.M. program	Mexico
Mr. Kiandjaja Holik, Th.M. program	Indonesia
Mrs. Liza Mihardja Holik, M.A. program	Indonesia
Mr. Martus Maleachi, Th.M. program	Indonesia
Mrs. Li-juan Meng, M.A. program	People's Republic of China
Mr. Gesa Nengean, M.T.S. program	Nigeria
Rev. Alejandro Pecorelli, Th.M. program	Argentina
Ms. Gabriella Racsok, Th.M. program	Hungary
Rev. Joseph Rika, M.A. program	Nigera (absent, visa denied)
Mr. Serguei Sossedkine, M.Div. program	Russia
Mrs. He-Ping Xiang, M.A. program	People's Republic of China
Ms. Sarah Zhang, M.A. program	People's Republic of China

Most of these students are receiving full support. The seminary raises the $109,000 balance needed through gifts from individuals, churches, classes, and, in one case, from a CRCNA agency for whom the student works. These students represent the most needy portion of the international students. They have the endorsement of their home churches and have pledged to return immediately upon completing their studies to assume the positions waiting for them. These students represent only about 20 percent of the international students studying at the seminary. Since the seminary assumed management of the CEACA endowment in 1996, the fund has grown from approximately $180,000 to $312,500.

VI. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Joel Boot, chairman, and Mr. Mark Muller, secretary, be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That the following faculty and staff reappointments be approved (italics indicate an advance in rank):

> Dr. Gary J. Bekker, as Academic Dean and Professor of Church Education and Missiology for four years, 1999-2003.
> Rev. Carl Bosma, as Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years, 1999-2001, with the stipulation that he be granted permanent tenure and be promoted to the rank of full professor upon receiving his doctor's degree.
> Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima, as *Professor* of New Testament with permanent tenure.
> Mr. Philip Vanden Berge, as Chief Financial Officer for four years, 1999-2003.
> Dr. Bastian Van Elderen, as Adjunct Professor of New Testament for three years, 1999-2002.

C. That the appointment of Dr. Lyle D. Bierma as Professor of Systematic Theology for three years (1999-2002) be approved.

D. That Dr. Harry Boonstra be granted the title of Theological Librarian Emeritus.

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Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Mark Muller, secretary

</div>

I. Introduction

CRC Publications continues to serve the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Jesus Christ worldwide by working at carrying out its mission as adopted by the CRC Publications Board in 1998:

> Provide resources that help followers of Jesus Christ to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom.

The core values that we have identified for our work are these:

> Our resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.

> Our resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture that are articulated in the Reformed confessions and expressed in the Contemporary Testimony.

> We will treat each other and those we serve with love and respect.

CRC Publications' ministry continues to be challenged by a number of current trends in our culture and in the church. Among them are the following:

– Increasingly divergent needs on the part of our customers
– Decline in denominational loyalty
– Rapid change in technology related to publishing and communications
– Changes in denominational structures and culture
– Congregationalism
– Anti-intellectualism

The following report is a summary of the work of our ministry during the past year. Responses to the trends outlined above, as well as others, are incorporated where appropriate. We look to synod for reactions to and input about any and all the activities described here, with a view toward providing better service to the churches so that their ministries can be enhanced.

II. Board organization, membership, and governance and other administrative matters

A. Oganization

A board of forty-nine delegates, one from each of the forty-six classes and three (at-large) delegates elected by synod, governs CRC Publications. The board ordinarily meets annually in February.

Between board meetings a fifteen-member executive committee (elected annually by the board) normally meets three times to supervise the ongoing work of the agency. Each member of the executive committee serves on one of three subcommittees: administrative, education, or periodicals.

B. Officers

The officers of the CRC Publications Board through June 1999 are as follows: Rev. Stanley Mast, president; Mr. Fred Herfst, vice president; Dr. Gloria Goris-Stronks, secretary; and Mr. Dennis Bergsma, treasurer.

C. At-large board member

The second term of one of our at-large board members, Mr. Robert De Jong, will be completed on June 30, 1999. As required by synodical guidelines, we are submitting two nominees for this position, which is designated for someone with legal expertise. The CRC Publications Board nominates Mr. Rick Bandstra and Mr. John Roels for a three-year term as at-large member with legal expertise.

Mr. Rick Bandstra is currently chief judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals. He is a former member of the Michigan House of Representatives and also served on the Synodical Committee on Race Relations for many years. He currently serves as president for the Alternative Directions Board and on the World Affairs Council for West Michigan. He is a member of Eastern Avenue CRC, where he serves as an elder and has served previously as deacon.

Mr. John Roels is an attorney at Wheeler Upham, a law firm specializing in general civil practice. He has served on the board of the Lawyers' Referral Service and on the denominational Committee to Revise Articles of Incorporation for congregations. He is a member of Boston Square CRC, where he is currently serving as Young People's leader and previously served as president of the council.

D. Long-range planning

The CRC Publications Board discussed the annual edition of CRC Publications' long-range plan, developed by staff. The board offered suggestions to the staff in the various areas of CRC Publications' ministry. The board then approved the plan in concept. The plan incorporates, where appropriate, strategies necessary to implement the denominational long-range plan.

E. Relationships with other organizations

Again last year staff placed considerable focus on developing closer working relationships with other CRC agencies. Much of that work has taken place as a result of the denominational strategic plan. Examples of these activities include the following: (1) Emily Brink, our music and liturgy editor, is coleader of the effort to develop strategies for the worship portion of the plan; (2) Robert De Moor, our editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department, chairs the team assigned to move forward on the nurture section of the plan; (3) John De Jager, director of World Literature Ministries, works half time as part of a team of staff assigned to coordinate implementation of the entire plan. In addition to the above, CRC Publications develops products to support the work of the various other CRC agencies. The most significant work in this regard is our ongoing support of the ministry of Home Missions.

In addition to partnering with CRC agencies, CRC Publications also has developed copublishing partnerships with a number of other denominations and publishers. We work closely with the RCA in a number of areas. In fact, the RCA promotes virtually all our products to all its congregations. Other denominations and/or organizations that aggressively promote some of our products are the United Methodist Church (Men's Life materials), the Assemblies of God, the Wesleyan Church, and the American Baptist Church. Finally, we continue to develop closer relationships with Youth Unlimited and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

F. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting the CRC Publications Board adopted a report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contained several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. Because of reductions in the price difference between recycled and nonrecycled paper, CRC Publications is now essentially achieving the goals of that report. About 95 percent of CRC Publications' materials was printed on recycled paper during 1997, including *The Banner* and the LiFE curriculum.

G. Ethnic-minority and disability concerns

Several years ago the CRC Publications Board adopted personnel policies and goals related to ethnic-minority persons. Currently 8 percent of our employees are minorities. Our goal is that, by the year 2000, 12 percent of our employees will be ethnic minorities.

During the next year we will be working with the other CRC agencies to begin an extensive long-range antiracism process, whereby we will try to eliminate racism and its effects in our culture, institutional documents, assumptions, and so forth.

H. World-Wide Web

Late last year the latest phase of our Web page was launched. This phase focuses on a few of our product and program areas and incorporates "featured" products in a number of areas. Plans are currently underway to place CRC Publications' entire catalog of products on the Web, with full shopping-cart ordering capabilities.

I. Brand-name change

During the past year a task force has been looking at whether a name change would help broaden the ministry of CRC Publications. The task force developed a recommendation, which the Board has approved, that the name of the agency remain CRC Publications but that a new brand name be identified for all the products of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department. We are hoping that this new brand name will be identified by the time synod meets.

J. Research project

The Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association, of which CRC Publications is a member, conducted a research study during the past year, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc., that identified what resources churches sought from their denominational publishers and how well they were being served by their publishers, at least as the churches perceived it.

In some ways the results of the research were very gratifying to CRC Publications. For example, 94 percent of the respondents (the most for any of the twenty-nine publishers that participated) said that our "resources have been improving in recent years." However, the results of this survey are also proving to be very helpful in identifying how CRC Publications can better serve our churches. For example, we find that the highest priority of churches is to provide excellent worship services. Also, while our churches responded very favorably to our curriculum for children, the responses were not quite as positive about our resources for youth and adults.

K. U. S. Structure Committee report

The CRC Publications Board reviewed the report of the U.S. Structure Committee at its February meeting. At that meeting the board approved a response to that report that was sent to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, as requested by that Board. It was our board's understanding that the Board of Trustees wished to receive all the initial responses from the agencies so that it could try to develop its own response, incorporating agency responses as appropriate.

After reviewing the Board of Trustees' response to these proposals, our board will determine whether it believes an additional response is necessary.

L. Salary disclosure

CRC Publications, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
17	2	2nd
15	1	2nd

III. CRC Publications' ministry

A. Periodicals Department

1. *The Banner*

The synodically adopted mandate for *The Banner* is to "inform readers about what is happening in the CRC, as well as in the church at large, to provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living, and to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and to the culture of which Christians and the CRC are a part."

At the time of this writing, *The Banner* has completed its first full year as a biweekly magazine. Anecdotal evidence suggests that readers appreciated the greater variety of articles that appeared in *The Banner* as well as the additional time between issues.

Initially after *The Banner* went biweekly, the number of subscriptions actually increased for a time, after a long period of decline. However, in recent months the number of new subscriptions picked up through promotions is less than the number of subscribers who do not renew. Thus we again are starting to see a subscription decline.

Partially in response to this development but mostly to make sure that *The Banner* continues to meet the needs of its diverse readership, the *Banner* staff will work on a complete redesign of the magazine, targeted for January 2000. In order to prepare for this Y2K design, the staff plans to engage in wide-ranging research done by an outside research firm. *The Banner* reaches a coalition of readers who have different reasons for subscribing. Some want it mostly for the church news, others mostly for stimulating articles on doctrine, and others because they like a particular column (or columns). The research will be designed to help us understand what the different parties in our coalition look like so that the *Banner* staff can respond appropriately to their varying desires and needs.

Reader preference is not the only factor that needs to be considered as the magazine is redesigned. The editor's own vision, the confessions, and synodical guidelines are examples of other important factors. And reader preferences are sometimes at odds with one another. Nevertheless, reader feedback is a very important element for deciding what the magazine will be like in the future.

Last year synod discussed the matter of editorial freedom in light of the ongoing changes in denominational structure. The specific incident that raised the issue was the decision of the Board of Trustees that, for a time, *The Banner* should not print any stories about the IRM matter. In response to the concerns raised about editorial freedom, synod adopted some editorial guidelines for *The Banner*. These guidelines have worked very well during the past year. The new structure proposals now before synod may again generate discussions about this issue.

In an attempt to cover developments in the entire denomination adequately, *The Banner* has established a network of *Banner* news correspondents. These people play a critical role in helping *The Banner* ensure comprehensive coverage of developments and events throughout our denomination. The news section is consistently rated as the most read by *Banner* readers.

As part of his duties, editor John Suk visits CRC churches all over North America in order to learn more about the varying segments of the CRC. He also regularly visits areas of the world where the CRC has substantial ministry activity.

2. *CRC Source*

January 1999 marks the fourth year of *CRC Source,* a newsmagazine produced by CRC Publications' Periodicals Department on behalf of the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. The magazine has a new look that should make the publication stand out from other denominational newsletters. A new marketing plan for the magazine will be implemented in early 1999; it should help *CRC Source* gain and retain readers. This publication's unique selling proposition is that it is the only publication where members of the CRC can get news about all the CRC agencies in one place. Another significant change for this magazine in 1999 is the change from direct mail to bulk mail for U.S. copies (this is only for churches that have mailboxes). This approach has been used in Canada since *Source* first appeared.

3. *Ministry Now* magazine

The most important development in the Periodicals Department during the last year is the ongoing study regarding the prospects of a ministry magazine. Last year some focus groups were asked to react to two sample versions of this proposed magazine. One version was an eight-page insert in *The Banner;* the other was a similar stand-alone version. The focus groups reacted positively to the concept of such a magazine, especially to the insert version. As of this writing, final decisions are being made regarding whether to proceed with this concept.

4. *Voice of the Reformed*

For the past several years synod has helped fund the *Voice of the Reformed,* a monthly periodical published by the Korean CRC community through a ministry-share allocation to CRC Publications. During the past year Rev. Seung-Jai Kang has served as editor in chief of this periodical. The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the content of the magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner.* Staff is trying to use the results of a survey of Korean pastors as well as other information to support ongoing efforts to improve the *Voice of the Reformed.*

B. *Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department (EWE)*
    The work of this department is carried out through five offices:

1. Curriculum Office

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, youth groups, adult small groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of this department. This office will be greatly affected by the denominational plan since the "Nurture" section of the plan calls for the development of "an integrated discipleship church curriculum." The editor in chief of the EWE Department is cochairing a team of staff from various agencies to spearhead that effort.

   a. For younger students

Most of those who express their views about the LiFE curriculum continue to show appreciation for the emphases of this curriculum: faith modeling, faith nurture, wondering, and a strong emphasis on the content of our faith. During the past year staff members have completed the significant task of revising this curriculum, based on input from churches that have been using it.

One disappointment during the past year has been declining sales of the LiFE curriculum. We will be doing some significant research to find out why that is so and to help us plan for future curriculum development. One option that we are considering is to do another revision of the BIBLE WAY curriculum.

Two significant projects that were completed during the past year are a new curriculum for two- and three-year-olds and a substantial revision of the Story Hour program, the curriculum for four- to six-year-olds that is used in conjunction with the Coffee Break program. The curriculum for twos and threes, called God Loves Me, incorporates Bible-story books that are also being sold separately.

   b. For youth

For junior high students we published a short course modeled after the popular Discover Your Gifts program for adults and called by the same name. We are also developing an interactive course on *Discover Your Church and Why You Need Each Other.* During the next year staff will develop plans for replacing/revising the Crossroads series for this age group.

A number of developments for senior high students are noteworthy. The "new concept" course *32 Great Bible Studies for Youth* (copublished

with Youth Unlimited and the RCA) is doing so well that we are planning a sequel. We are also receiving rave reviews for *Which Way to God: A Christian Look at World Religions.* We've added several courses in the LifeWise and Prime-Time series. In consultation with our Youth Advisory Panel we are developing plans for revising some of our backbone courses: *Landmarks (*on the Heidelberg Catechism), *Decisions,* and *A Sure Thing.* Much of our work for youth is based on an extensive research project on youth-ministry needs that we did last year.

c. For adults

CRC Publications' adult curriculum falls into four general categories: Bible study, church and doctrine, Christian living, and spiritual growth. In the Bible-study area we have produced several new products in each of our series: Revelation Series, Fresh Look, Discover Life (Men's Life), and Discover Your Bible (Coffee Break).

Several interesting new products came out this year in our "non-series" subtitled *What the Bible Teaches, What You Need to Know:*

– *The Day of Christ's Return* by Andrew Kuyvenhoven
– *Miraculous Healing and You* by Henry Wildeboer
– *Straight Talk About Spiritual Warfare* by Jeff Stam

In the church and doctrine area we have published *Speaking of Comfort: A Look at the Heidelberg Catechism*, as a sequel to *Speaking as One: A Look at the Ecumenical Creeds.* These are intended to replace Neal Plantinga's *A Place to Stand.* We are also developing a booklet entitled *Reformed: What It Means, Why It Matters* by Neal Plantinga.

d. For people with mental impairments

Each year we publish two new minicourses, funded by the Friendship Ministries Board, in the basic Friendship Series curriculum. During the past year we released a Spanish version (*Amistad*) of one year of the Friendship Series curriculum.

Friendship Ministries is currently engaged in intensive discussions about future development directions, asking whether the focus should be on revising the Friendship Series, on developing new curriculum, or on translating more of the curriculum into Spanish.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with a ministry in Minneapolis, we continue to expand the list of curriculum materials available for persons with visual impairments. The entire LiFE curriculum is now available in braille. A small ministry share is allocated for this work.

2. Evangelism Office

Our relationship with Home Missions remains stimulating, productive, and mutually beneficial. We have begun more extensive planning with that agency for how we can provide better resources for new-church developments (NCDs) and multicultural CRCs.

Many of the new products are Bible studies to support the Men's Life and Coffee Break programs. In addition, some significant other new or soon-to-be-released products include the following:

- *Focus Your Ministry: Developing a Congregation Plan,* a self-guiding planning guide for church leaders
- *Welcome and Enfold,* a substantial revision of an earlier product
- *Finding the Right Pastor for Your Church* and *Practicing Racial Reconciliation in Your Church,* two new products in the Healthy Church Series

3. Music and Liturgy Office

   a. *Reformed Worship*

   In the twelfth year of its existence, *Reformed Worship* again came out with four issues of practical resources to support churches in their worship planning. During the past year, subscriptions to this magazine reached four thousand for the first time. *Reformed Worship* received the Evangelical Press Association's Award of Excellence in the Christian Ministries category last year; this is the top award for overall excellence. Staff is using the results of a subscriber and lapsed-subscriber survey as a basis for reviewing the editorial content of this magazine.

   b. Other projects

   The most significant new product published last year by this office was the *Psalter Hymnal Handbook.* This publication is selling well and is much appreciated.

   Another significant publication on which this office is hard at work is a new hymnal supplement, tentatively titled *Sing! A New Creation.* This project is being done in cooperation with the RCA. The board reviewed the three hundred songs that are currently being considered and provided feedback to the committee on these. Due to the generosity of a donor we will also be able to publish a companion leader's edition.

   Other new projects of note from this office include devotionals for Advent and Lent in the HomeLink series, another set of *Psalter Hymnal* instrumentations, several new Christmas dramas, several more dramatic readings for the Scripture Alive series, and several additional practical pamphlets in the So You've Been Asked To . . . series.

   c. Other developments

   Dr. Emily Brink, the music and liturgy editor, has been asked to serve as one of the two point persons for the implementation of the "Worship" section of the denominational plan. She will be working closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and other agencies. This work will include many conferences and consultations with local churches.

   Another result of Dr. Brink's work with the Calvin Institute has been a restructuring of the Conference on Liturgy and Music (COLAM). This conference, formerly held every four years, will now happen every two years; shorter weekend conferences will be held in various places around North America in intervening years.

   One of the findings from the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association survey mentioned earlier in this report was that, when congregational leaders were asked to name the most pressing issue they were dealing with, worship was mentioned most often. Partially in response to this fact, but also in order to fully implement the denominational plan, CRC Publications plans to add an additional staff person in this office, an associate music and liturgy editor.

d. Worship Committee

The CRC has had a standing committee for worship issues since 1964, when synod appointed a Liturgical Committee. For a variety of reasons, that committee was moved to CRC Publications in 1985, and its name was changed to the CRC Worship Committee. Its mandate was as follows:

> To meet the contemporary needs of the Christian Reformed churches in the areas of liturgical forms and resources.
> To study liturgical uses and practices in our churches in the light of Reformed liturgical practices and past synodical decisions, and to advise synod (through the CRC Publications Board) as to the guidance and supervision it ought to provide local congregations in liturgical matters.

The understanding at that time was that synodical mandates could still be given to this committee and that all recommendations to synod would be channeled through the CRC Publications Board. However, in recent years synod has given few assignments to the Worship Committee. Several mandates that were given, such as evaluating new Bible translations, were subsequently assigned to subcommittees with expertise in particular areas.

For these reasons and several others, the CRC Publications Board, at its 1998 meeting, approved a Worship Committee recommendation to form a "committee to study and possibly redesign the mandate and structure of the current Worship Committee." At its 1999 meeting the board reviewed this ad hoc committee's recommendations and, after discussion, decided to ask its executive committee to determine how to respond to them.

4. Training and Consulting Office

The work of this office is closely related to our curriculum in that it provides the training and advice of a network of church-education consultants (CECs), who are essential to the use of our curriculum in the churches. A number of specific workshops are offered. New workshops are being planned in relationships, faith nurture, and technique.

In cooperation with the Reformed Church in America, this office also provides training and consulting support for churches with children's worship programs. A new book to support this activity was published during the past year.

5. General Publications Office

The General Publications Office deals with those materials that do not neatly fit into the mandates of the other offices. These include anything from devotionals to leadership-training materials, to literacy materials. The best way to communicate the work of this office is to highlight some of the significant products that were published this past year or are currently in development:

– *Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church* – a four-hundred-page history of the CRC by James Schaap
– *ESL: Creating a Quality English as a Second Language Program*
– *Guiding God's People in a Changing World: A Handbook for Elders*
– *Rediscovering the Secret of Lectio Divina*

- *The Genesis Message: A New Look at the Old Stories* – a new concept for an adult devotional/small-group Bible study
- *Face It!* – a devotional on the theme of the Youth Unlimited Convention, published in cooperation with Youth Unlimited
- *This Splendid Journey* – a devotional by Joel Nederhood
- *Beyond the Agenda* – a devotional guide for church councils, committees, and leadership groups
- *Rembrandt's Jesus* – a book that puts readers in touch with Rembrandt's deep spirituality

C. *World Literature Ministries (WLM)*

1. Purpose and overview

World Literature Ministries coordinates the efforts of the various CRC agencies in publishing and distributing biblical Christian literature in a variety of languages. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to and nurture them in a Reformed view of faith and life.

During the past year this department continued to implement the new structure devised a year or so ago. This structure calls for a literature team to be formed for each of the languages in which WLM works. Each literature team will be made up of representatives from interested agencies. The team will review and plan for needed new products, and the agencies involved will provide the necessary subsidy to ensure that the publications are financially viable. The only team that has been formed to date is the Spanish Literature Ministries Committee. This committee is functioning well.

Partially because of the way the work of this department is now structured, this department is heavily involved in collaborative planning with other agencies. Much of this work comes out of the implementation of the denominational plan. Also, John De Jager, the director of this department, works half time as part of a staff team charged with implementing the denominational plan. In that role he also is heavily involved in working cooperatively with staff from other agencies.

During the past year a significant merger took place that involved this department. CRC Publications purchased Nueva Creacion, the Spanish-product line of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. This action, along with the TELL merger of a few years ago and a number of distribution agreements with other Reformed publishers, has made Libros Desafio (the name for the Spanish-product line of WLM) virtually the only distributor of Reformed Spanish materials.

2. Project overview for various languages

a. Korean literature

WLM continues to publish translations of Discover Your Bible courses (supporting the Coffee Break ministry). This office also assisted the general secretary's office in publishing the Korean edition of *God's Diverse and Unified Family.*

b. Russian literature

The project of translating Calvin's Institutes into Russian has now been fully funded. The third and final volumes of this work should be completed by the time synod meets. A quotation from a reader in the Orlov region of Russia shows the appreciative reception this work is enjoying: "I want to thank you all from all my heart that you send to me such useful literature. . . . I am not the only one reading this book now. . . . I don't give it to every one to read, only to those who show that they are especially serious in knowing our God."

c. Spanish literature

This aspect of the work of WLM remains, by far, the most significant. Because of our increased marketing staff and the distribution agreements mentioned earlier, sales have increased substantially in recent years. This past year an additional editor was also hired to help with the translation work.

Among the twenty recent releases and new projects are the following:

– *Asi fue Calvino (This Was John Calvin)* by Thea Van Halsema
– *Introduccion a la teologia sistematica (Introduction to Systematic Theology)* by Louis Berkhof
– *Efesios (New Testament Commentary: Ephesians)* by Dr. William Hendriksen
– *Empowering Leaders Through Coaching* by Steven Ogne and Thomas Nebel
– *Diccionario de teologia (Dictionary of Theology)* by Everett Harrison
– *Amino: Como mantenerse cuando todo se derrumba (Holding Together When It's Falling Apart)* by Brent Averill and Edith Bajema

D. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include customer service, promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads and subscriptions, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting. The executive director has been serving as marketing director for the past several years.

As can be seen from the chart below, the CRC's publishing ministry is much broader than our own denomination; more than half of CRC Publications' accounts and sales are to non-CRC churches. This fact, we believe, speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Denomination	Active Customers	%	Sales	%
CRC	902	8	1,446,042	37
Other	3,521	71	1,736,431	44
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	550	11	262,650	19
TOTAL	4,973	100	3,933,802	100

Sales for a number of CRC Publications' product lines are down from prior years. The reasons for this development are probably many and complex: demographic changes, divergence in needs, and declining denominational

loyalty are among them. As mentioned previously in this report, we are heavily engaged in research projects to help us determine how to better meet market needs. Two years ago we did an extensive youth-market research project; last year we participated in a multidenominational research project under the auspices of the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association. This year we are doing an extensive research project to find out churches' needs in children's curriculum, and we're doing another survey of *Banner* subscribers. We also regularly do telephone surveys about the usefulness of specific products. We hope that all this information will enable us to serve our churches better.

For most CRC Publications' products, the primary vehicles for marketing are the CRC Publications' catalog, direct-mail announcements to the churches regarding new products, minicatalogs based on categories of products, and advertising in *The Banner* and other periodicals. During the past year we have implemented a system for evaluating the results of each promotion. We are using that data to help develop better promotional strategies. We believe there is still a significant problem in getting information about our products into the hands of the right persons in the churches—the PCPA survey showed that over 30 percent of local church leaders do not receive direct mail from CRC Publications. Among the new strategies we are piloting or considering are the following:

- A system of CRC Publications' representatives in each church—this concept is currently being tested in several Chicago-area classes
- A significantly expanded Web site
- A more intentional strategy of promoting our products through bookstores
- Meeting with various staff and volunteers of our larger churches

The Marketing Department is spending a great deal of time on converting computer systems. Last year we converted our *Banner*-subscription system; this year we are converting our order-processing system.

Marketing staff working with WLM continue to experience good results. The staff position in this area was increased to full-time during the past year.

E. Personnel matters

The CRC Publications staff team is made up of forty employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The staff council is a management group made up of the executive director, Mr. Gary Mulder; Rev. John Suk, Periodicals Department (*The Banner*); Rev. Robert De Moor, EWE Department; Mr. John De Jager, World Literature Ministries Department; Ms. Lana Hasper, Marketing Department and Sales; Ms. Darlene Serrano, marketing manager (WLM); and Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services.

F. Finances

Last year, as part of a significant denominational restructuring, our finance staff persons were all reassigned to the central denominational finance office (Financial Services). Up to this point, the results have been positive; our services have remained of high quality, and our costs have declined somewhat.

The CRC Publications Board remains firmly committed to the goal that CRC Publications' ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that there may always be projects undertaken (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This situation is particularly true for our World Literature Ministries Department, as mentioned earlier. However, our ministry-share request for 2000 constitutes only 3.7 percent of our annual budget.

Last year we experienced a positive bottom line for a second consecutive year, even after a substantial year-end inventory write-off. This year we also anticipate a positive bottom line. We need to build up substantial reserves in order to fund our next new core curriculum; it will take careful financial planning to achieve that goal.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1998, and budgets for the fiscal years 1999 and 2000. These reports have been submitted to the director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement.* The CRC Publications Board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 1999.

IV. Recommendations

A. The CRC Publications Board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed.

For the board
    Rev. Stanley Mast, president
    Mr. Fred Herfst, vice president
    Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*
    Rev. John Suk, editor in chief

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism
    Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For the Worship Committee
    Dr. Emily Brink

B. That synod elect either Mr. Richard Bandstra or Mr. John Roels to a three-year term as an at-large member of the CRC Publications Board with expertise in law.

C. That synod recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support for 1999.

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CRC Publications
Gary Mulder, executive director

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Christian Reformed Home Missions

I. Introduction

Gathering God's Growing Family: Seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory expresses the central theme and driving purpose of Christian Reformed Home Missions. *Gathering* invites Christian Reformed people, churches, and classes to be active in evangelizing and discipling in obedience to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18) and the Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-39).

A. The foundations of Gathering

1. Because God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18), the CRC has mandated the Board of Home Missions "to lead the church in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church."

    This mandate has three parts:

    > a. Encourage and assist churches and classes in their work of evangelism.
    > b. Initiate, support, and guide new-church development in cooperation with local churches and classes.
    > c. Initiate, support, and guide other evangelistic ministries in cooperation with local churches and classes.
    >
    > (Home Missions Order, Art. 2)

2. As a church the CRCNA confesses,

    > It is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, *ought to be announced and declared* without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people. . . .
    >
    > (Canons of Dordt, II, 5, italics added)

3. The core values of *Gathering*

    a. Care: The church cares passionately for the salvation and discipling of lost people, as God calls it to do.

    b. Prayer: Prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission to lost people.

    c. The church is the missionary: The local church, empowered by the Spirit, is the primary agency for carrying out God's mission in the great harvest field of North America.

    d. Growth: The increasing growth and diversity of the Christian Reformed Church are essential to the effectiveness of this mission.

    e. Flow: Wherever and whenever we, God's people, exercise vision and faith, God provides resources for his work.

    (Board of Home Missions, 1993)

4. The booklet *Missionary Congregations: Developing Churches That Are Biblically Faithful, Responsibly Reformed, and Culturally Relevant*, published in 1997 by Home Missions, describes and explains the biblical and theological foundations of *Gathering*.

B. *Goals of Home Missions expressed in* Gathering

1. Prayer: Mobilizing the Christian Reformed Church in focused prayers for its ministry of seeking the lost and discipling the found.

2. Established-church development: Encouraging and equipping established churches to seek the lost and disciple the found.

3. New-church development: Initiating, supporting, and guiding the development of new churches for disciple making in cooperation with partner churches and classes.

4. Other disciple-making ministries: Initiating, supporting, and guiding campus and other disciple-making ministries in cooperation with partner churches and classes.

5. Financial resources: Developing partnerships which provide financial resources to support the goals of *Gathering*

C. *The CRC denominational vision and goals approved by Synod 1997*
   Synod 1997 endorsed the CRC Vision and Mission Statement along with comprehensive goals and strategies. Home Missions, along with CRWRC, will give leadership to the "North American Outreach" section of the CRC goals and strategies:

   1. Agencies assist congregations so that, by 2002, at least 90 percent of members are able to express their Christian faith and 50 percent are involved in an intentional and evangelistic relationship with a person who is not a believer.
   2. Agencies assist congregations and classes to start and develop disciple-making new churches at a rate that increases annually from 25 in 1998 to 40 by 2002. All of these are to be sponsored by a parent church, and all of them are to minister wholistically within their diverse cultural context.
   3. Agencies assist congregations so that, by 2002, 70 percent of congregations are involved in at least two community ministries to the poor and/or disadvantaged so they can experience the fullness of God's grace.
   4. Agencies will assist so that, by 2002, thirty classes will have a visionary outreach ministry plan in place.
      (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 58-59; Goal 2 amended in 1998)

D. *Evangelism program in 1998*
   By God's grace, in the last ten years CRC growth through evangelism has totaled 27,348 persons. In the 1998 reporting period, 2,777 persons were added through evangelism (compared to 2,738 persons in 1997). It continues to concern the whole church that as of September 1, 1998, total CRC membership is reported as 275,466 members, 3,563 fewer than last year. The number of congregations decreased from 972 to 964. Since 1989, new congregations accounted for 6,818 persons added through evangelism. In 1998 at least 614 people were added through evangelism in new and emerging churches.

II. Board and executive committee

A. *Board*
   The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod charged with guiding and carrying out the denominational home-missions program. The board has forty-nine members. Forty-seven members are chosen by their respective classes; two are board members-at-large who have special expertise. Twelve

board members are from Canada and thirty-seven from the United States. The Board of Home Missions holds its annual meeting in late April.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Rev. Shawn Sikkema, president; Rev. Michael Reitsma, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (executive director); Rev. Alvern Gelder, recording secretary; and Dr. Leon De Lange, treasurer.

The officers of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions of Canada are Rev. Michael Reitsma, president; Rev. Karl House, vice president; Rev. Evert Busink, secretary; Rev. Jerry Hoytema, treasurer; and Rev. Daniel Tigchelaar, assistant treasurer.

C. Executive committee

The executive committee meets in September, December, and February. It is made up of the following elected delegates, one from each of the designated regions.

Regions	Classes	Delegates
Western Canada	B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Rev. Michael Reitsma
Central Canada	Chatham, Huron, Niagara	Rev. Daniel Tigchelaar
Eastern Canada	Hamilton, Toronto, Quinte, Eastern Canada	Rev. Ruth Hofman
Northwest U.S.	Pacific Northwest, Columbia, Central California, Yellowstone	Rev. Bruce Persenaire
Southwest U.S.	California South, Greater Los Angeles, Arizona, Pacific Hanmi, Red Mesa	Rev. Andrew Vanden Akker
Midwest U.S.	Rocky Mountain, Iakota, Minnkota, Heartland	Rev. Shawn Sikkema
Central U.S.	Lake Superior, Northcentral Iowa, Pella	Rev. Evert Busink
Chicago	Northern Illinois, Chicago South, Illiana, Wisconsin	Mr. Al Vanden Bosch
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Northeast, Hudson, Hackensack, Southeast U.S.	Rev. Alvern Gelder
Out-state Michigan	Northern Michigan, Muskegon, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie	Rev. Emmett Harrison
Ottawa County	Holland, Zeeland, Georgetown, Grandville	Mrs. Joyce Sikkema
Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Thornapple Valley	Rev. Maurice De Young
Members-at-large		Dr. Leon De Lange Mr. Harvey Rozema

D. Salary disclosure

Executive staff persons are being paid within the approved salary ranges.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile
17	2	3rd quartile
16	2	1st, 3rd quartile

III. Home Missions' ministries

A. Established-church development

1. The ministry of Home Missions directly impacts at least seven hundred of our churches and many classes as Home Missions seeks to make passion for seeking the lost and discipling the found integral to the calling of every member, every church, and every classis.

2. This ministry in support of established churches is accomplished through

   a. Assisting and encouraging churches in praying (as a foundational element in *Gathering*) that the CRCNA may be increasingly and effectively used by God to reach the lost and to disciple the found.

   b. Planning and consulting with churches and classes so that they effectively find the lost and disciple the found.

   c. Developing leadership through networks and conferences so that pastors and other church leaders grow in their ability to lead *Gathering* churches and classes.

   d. Training in small-group evangelizing so that local churches are assisted in their work with small-group, life-changing *Gathering* ministries.

   e. Resourcing churches with partnership grants and materials to help them become mission-shaped churches.

3. The results prayerfully envisioned and worked for in established churches are

   a. A praying church: All the members, churches, and classes mobilized in prayer for the Spirit's blessing on the witness and efforts of the CRCNA to bring an increasing number of people to faith and disciple them as fruitful followers of Jesus.

   b. A focused church: Healthy churches that know their purpose and vision and are growing in all ways (including size) while effectively ministering where God has placed them.

   c. A committed people: They are now part of God's family, growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and contributing to and participating in the ministry of the church.

4. The strategies and activities used in working for these results may be summarized as follows:

   a. Mobilizing prayers for the lost: Implementing a plan for congregational and classical prayer coordinators to encourage churches, classes, and denominational agencies to pray for effective *Gathering*.

   b. Promoting classical ministry development: Assisting classes through the classical home-missions committees and diaconal conferences in doing ministry planning (through the CRWRC/CRHM Classical Renewal Ministry Team). Holding regional classical forums to explore how the classis can be an effective instrument of the mission of God.

c. Promoting ethnic (non-Anglo) ministries: Working with CRHM's New-Church Development Department and five intercultural ministry directors to help the CRCNA grow in its multicultural character and ministry.

d. Collaborating with (1) Calvin Theological Seminary by participating in teaching courses on church-development subjects, with (2) CRC Publications by doing mutual planning and publishing evangelistic resources, with (3) Youth Unlimited by providing 109 SWIMers for twenty-seven new and established churches during the summer, and with (4) CRWRC on classical renewal.

e. Focusing Networks: (1) Developing interconnected leadership networks and (2) enabling eleven Focusing Church Networks involving fifty-seven churches.

f. MasterPlanning: Helping seventeen churches define their ministries and draw up specific ministry plans.

g. Promoting small-group evangelism strategies/ministries and providing resources: Approximately 4,000 persons participated in small groups and Coffee Break/Story Hour workshops, and 850 attended rallies. This includes working with pastors, councils, and ministry-team leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry. Small-group representatives throughout the U.S. and Canada also offer workshops on witnessing and incorporation of new members. The biennial Coffee Break/Story Hour convention was held in July at Gordon College near Boston with an attendance of 900.

h. Sponsoring *Gathering* conferences in connection with Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Community Church: 202 leaders representing thirty-nine churches participated in the Willow Creek conference, and 142 leaders representing thirty-two churches partici-pated in the Saddleback conference.

i. Making Partnership Assistance Grants: Providing financial grants for sixty-six established churches to help them advance their ministries.

5. In summary

All the work Home Missions does with established churches is carried out for the purpose of empowering churches and classes to be effective signs and instruments of God's kingdom and harvest.

In all of these ministries there is a prayerful expectation that God continues to add new people to his churches and sets them free to minister as members of the new community in keeping with the spiritual gifts the Spirit has given them.

B. New-church development

1. Projected and actual new-church starts, 1988 through 2000

More than ten years ago Home Missions adopted the goal of helping to start 240 new churches between 1988 and 2000. With the blessing of God, a total of 205 new-church starts have occurred from January 1988 to February 1999. Although not all church starts result in ongoing ministries, as long as

they do exist, God uses these new groups to lead people into closer fellowship with Christ and his church. Approximately 75 percent of all new starts continue as emerging or established churches today.

Year*	Projected Starts	Projected Cumulative	Actual Starts	Actual Cumulative
1988	14	14	13	13
1989	15	29	14	27
1990	17	46	20	47
1991*	17	63	10*	57
1992	18	81	13	70
1993	19	100	20	90
1994	21	121	20	110
1995	21	142	27	137
1996	22	164	19	156
1997	24	188	17	173
1998	25	213	19	192
1999	27	240	13**	205***

*1991 was calculated as an eight-month year.
**Starts from 9/1/98 to 2/1/99
***Total starts from 1/1/88 to 2/1/99

2. Goal for church planting in North America, 1998 - 2002

The denominational goal for church planting in North America, as amended by the Ministries Coordinating Council, now serves as the marching orders for Home Missions New-Church Development (NCD) Department. This goal calls "for agencies to assist congregations and classes to start and develop disciple-making new churches at a rate that increases annually from twenty-five in 1998 to forty by 2002, all of them sponsored by a parent church and all of them ministering wholistically within their diverse cultural contexts" (MCC Minute 98-070, June 11, 1998). Based on approximately one thousand CRC congregations, this goal calls for increasing the annual rate of starting new churches from the current pace of 2 percent annually up to 4 percent annually by 2002. This revised goal includes the following key strategies:

    a. To encourage and assist classes to include plans for new-church development in their outreach plans.

    b. To collaborate with Calvin Theological Seminary and others in raising up dozens of qualified new-church developers annually, especially with the assistance of church-based training programs (such as the

Leadership Development Networks now functioning in various locations).

   c. To provide incentives and helps for both established churches and emerging churches to serve as new-church parents within their own community or region.

   d. To partner with CRWRC and other diaconal programs in helping new churches to minister wholistically, with the goal that one-fourth of them will be located in communities of "high need."

This goal, approved by the Ministries Coordinating Council for 1998 through 2002, now builds upon the Home Missions' goal for 1988 through 2000. Synod is asked to pray that the pace of new-church starts will continue to increase over the next several years, as projected by the denominational goal. Also pray that the effectiveness of new churches will continue to increase, for an increasingly abundant gathering of God's harvest.

Year	Projected Starts	Projected Cumulative	Actual Starts	Actual Cumulative
1998	25	25	19	19
1999	27	52	12*	31
2000	30	82		
2001	35	115		
2002	40	155		

3. Partnering with new and emerging churches in 1999

As of January 1999, Home Missions is partnering financially with more than 120 new and emerging churches. Another fifteen locations have been approved for opening as soon as missionary pastors are recruited. Home Missions also provides guidance and financial support for approximately twenty in-training positions for church-planting residencies, seminary internships, and apprenticeships. In addition, Home Missions provides partnership funding for Leadership Development Network programs in Abbotsford, British Columbia; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Houston, Texas; Moreno Valley, California; and Toronto, Ontario, with a view to raising up more leaders for the harvest. Specific new-church starts and funding conclusions for this reporting period are listed below.

a. New-church starts from September 1997 through August 1998

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Holland, MI/Mision Discipular	Florencio Lopez	9/97
Carson, CA/Grace Filipino #2	Elmer Tandayu	9/97
Las Vegas, NV/ Yung Kwang	Myung Soo Lee	9/97
New Westminster, BC/Queens	Bill Tuininga	9/97
Petoskey, MI/Living Stone	Joseph Fox	9/97
Surrey, BC/Bridge Community	Jim Heuving	9/97
++Winnipeg, MB/Red River Christian Fellowship	John van Drongelen	9/97
Denver, CO/Outpost	Jeff Van Kooten	10/97

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Edmonton, AB/Edmonton Korean	Won Joung	12/97
Hartford, CT/Hartford Hispanic	Carlos Aranguiz	12/97
Darien, IL/Rhythm Ministries	Daniel Maat	2/98
Horicon, WI/Marshview Ministry	David Katsma	2/98
+Abbotsford, BC/Leadership- Development Training	John Poortenga	1/98
Pomona, CA/Betel Hispanic	Albino Melendez	1/98
Jersey City, NJ/Filipino NCD	Albert Sideco	1/98
Tracy, CA/Heartland Church	Mark Humphrey	3/98
Ewa Plain, HI/Hawaii restart	Hugo Venegas	4/98
Savage, MN/ Woodbridge Comm.	Mark Brouwer	5/98
Bellflower, CA/ New Life Church	John Choi	6/98
Las Vegas, NV/Grace Valley	Steve Wunderink	6/98

+Leadership-development program
++New-church "restart"

b. New-church starts from September 1998 through February 1999

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Anchorage, AK/NCD Ministry	David Kuiper	9/98
Atlanta, GA/Vision One	George Boyd	9/98
Bayonne, NJ/Bayonne Hispanic	Denis Calix	9/98
Cleveland, OH/Urban NCD	Rayfield Benton	9/98
Folsom, CA/River Rock Church	Tim Blackmon	9/98
Garden Grove/ Orange Co. Calvary	Byoung il Le	9/98
Garden Grove/ Orange County	Choong Hyu John Y. Kim	9/98
+Irvine, CA/NCD residency	Timothy Won	9/98
Lisle, IL/Horizon Community	Dan Jongsma	9/98
Long Beach, CA/	Orlando Alfaro	9/98
Los Angeles, CA/The Gracious Ark	Jin Hwan Oh	9/98
+Orlando, FL/East Orlando NCD	John Aukema	9/98
Vancouver, BC/West Coast Comm.	James Berry	9/98
+N. Stockton, CA/NCD residency	Charles Louvau	11/98
Holland, MI/Hardewyk GenX	Trent Walker	1/99
Sunnyside, WA/Sunnyside NCD	Gerry Muller	2/99

+New-church residencies

c. Funding conclusions from September 1997 through August 1998

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
*Allen, TX/All Nations Grace	NeeOdoi Thompson	9/96
Anchorage, AK/Anchorage Korean	Kyung Soo Jho	9/95
Arcadia, CA/Kwang Myung CRC	Peter Lee	9/95
Atlanta, GA/Shalom Korean	Charles Jeon	9/95
*Austin, TX/Chapel of the Hills	Jim Koopman	3/95
Fairview, AB/Faith Fellowship	Bill Weenink	9/90
Fullerton, CA/ Orange Kor. daughter	Byoung II Song	4/96
Garden Grove, CA/ Korean Presbyterian	Young Ook Kim	9/94
Garden Grove, CA/Orange Han Ministry	Seung Won Yoon	9/95
Holland, MI/Holland Lao CRC	Rawat Rasasak	9/92
Los Angeles, CA/ Chosen People	In-Chul Kim	9/94
Maple Grove, MN/Woodland Creek	Steve Zwart	9/88
Miami, FL/Buenas Nuevas	Gianni Gracia	9/89
Northridge, CA/Mission of Love	Hyung-Ju Park	9/93
Pella, IA/Grace Fellowship	Peter Kelder	9/95
*Sioux City, IA/Siouxland Vietnamese	Viet Hoang Tran	9/94

Sun Valley, CA/Sol Del Valle	Gilbert Varela	1/81
*Tempe, AZ/Principe de Paz	Esteban Lugo	9/94
Vancouver, BC/Faith and Action	Paul Le	3/91
W. Palm Beach, FL/Good Samaritan	German Moreno	9/95

*Churches discontinued or separated from CRC

d. Funding conclusions September 1998 to February 1999

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
*Buena Park,CA/Berea Hispanic	Francisco Golon	9/93
*Indianapolis, IN/Discovery	Rob Sizemore	8/94
+Orlando, FL/Crosswind	Keith Mannes	6/94
+Orlando, FL/Hispanic NCD	Guillermo Ortiz	4/95

*Churches discontinued
+Personnel positions now vacant; church future undetermined

The Home Missions NCD team consists of central-office personnel and Home Missions regional and intercultural directors. Its work can be effective, however, only through partnership with other agencies and in collaboration with all the missionary pastors and other local leaders committed to *Gathering* through the ministry of new churches. Above all, this enterprise is dependent on the indispensable blessing of our almighty missionary God.

C. Other disciple-making ministries

1. Partnering with campus ministries

   a. The current vision and development of CRC campus ministry are guided by the comprehensive study report "To Pursue the Mission," developed by the Campus Ministry Association in 1995 and adopted by Home Missions. Copies of "To Pursue the Mission" are available from the Office of the Campus Ministry Director, c/o Christian Reformed Home Missions.

   b. There are over forty CRC campus ministries in Canada and the United States. Eighteen campus ministries are supported by Home Missions Partnership Assistance Grants:

University of Alberta	University of Western Ontario
University of New Brunswick	Paterson State University
McMaster University	University of Guelph
Wilfrid Laurier University	Waterloo University
Wayne State University	Ferris State University
Iowa State-Korean	Iowa State University
University of Iowa	Queen's University
University of New Mexico	S.W. Indian Polytechnic Institute
University of Toronto	Brock University

New opportunities for campus ministry are being pursued through staff search or feasibility studies at

University of South Dakota	York University
Eastern Michigan University	University of Northern British Columbia
Dalhousie University	Brandon University

c. In 1997 Dr. Willis Van Groningen, formerly campus pastor at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, became the first Christian Reformed Home Missions campus-ministry director. He resides in Kingston and maintains ties to the Geneva Fellowship ministry at Queens. The new campus-ministry director consults with Christian Reformed campus ministries across North America, administers partnership-assistance funding, develops ministry standards and evaluation tools for campus ministries, and marshals denominational resources to further aid campus ministries. The Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts includes a campus-ministry track, and Calvin College has agreed to cosponsor an annual lecture tour in support of campus ministry. Calvin Theological Seminary hosted a campus-ministry day with a special lecture and information session. In addition, a campus-ministry internship has been developed at the University of Alberta. Other avenues of identifying and equipping a new generation of campus ministers are being explored.

    The generous commitment of prayer, persons, and funding support of local congregations, classes, and the denomination for this vital mission is deeply appreciated. The grace and wisdom of God have been poured out on individuals and institutions alike with life-changing results.

2. Partnering with Red Mesa schools and the Rehoboth-Red Mesa Foundation

    Home Missions continues to partner with the Crownpoint, Rehoboth, and Zuni Christian schools in the western New Mexico area of Classis Red Mesa. Home Missions' overall objective is to guide and assist these schools in ways that increase their effectiveness in educating, evangelizing, and discipling their students, that promote local vision and commitment, and that encourage their progress toward financial independence. The three schools have a combined enrollment of approximately five hundred students, of whom more than three hundred are Native American. Financial subsidy, although decreasing from year to year, remains an important source of income for the schools. Specifically, in the 1998-1999 school year Home Missions is providing partnership funding of $507,000 for the three schools combined.

    The Rehoboth-Red Mesa Foundation, a vision of the churches and schools of Classis Red Mesa, was incorporated during calendar year 1997. The foundation was formed to serve the Red Mesa schools and churches primarily by developing financial resources to complement other sources of support for Red Mesa ministries and to some extent also to replace denominational subsidies. With this purpose in mind, already in 1996 Home Missions agreed to transfer title of the nine-hundred-acre Rehoboth property to the foundation to be used in keeping with its stated purposes. These uses may include land sales, lease arrangements, and all other appropriate and feasible income-generating strategies. The foundation's executive board, which includes a voting majority of Native American Christians, has been working for more than a year to organize its work and position itself legally for ownership of this property. Home Missions continues to work and pray for the completion of this historic action before the turn of the century.

D. Finance and advancement

One of Home Missions' core *Gathering* values states that "wherever and whenever God's people exercise vision and faith, God provides resources of money and spiritual gifts for his work." Home Missions is grateful for generous and faithful continued support of its ministries.

1. Resources

a. Financial resources

Through strong giving from churches, individuals, and businesses, God provided abundantly in fiscal 1998. Total gift income was equal to that of 1997, and the ministry was able to fund all programs as planned. All giving categories, including ministry-share receipts, increased slightly from the previous year, except for church offerings. Total expenses were managed below budget without curtailment of ministry programs and with a balanced budget. The 1999 ministry-share request did not increase from the 1998 request.

In 1997 Home Missions and other CRC-related agencies learned that the IRM company, which had received major restricted-funds investments from Home Missions, had suspended interest payments. The IRM company and all investor holdings are now in control of bankruptcy court. The IRM problem has been a major preoccupation of CRCNA and Home Missions staff and board in 1998. One IRM property in which Home Missions had invested has been sold, and approximately $800,000 is being held in escrow, awaiting equitable bankruptcy resolution.

b. Personnel resources

Home Missions gratefully notes that volunteers donating their time and various talents in both the central office and field ministries continue to provide numerous benefits to Home Missions and affiliated ministries.

c. Prayer and financial partnerships across cultures

God is blessing the Christian Reformed Church with gifted leaders from various ethnic groups. Our denomination is honoring God by partnering with ethnic groups across Canada and the United States. This outreach is being recognized as a positive outflow of Christ's love for all God's children. There are more than sixty Korean Christian Reformed congregations and numerous Hispanic, Vietnamese, and Laotian congregations. The increased interest in and support of local churches for these ministries is deeply appreciated.

d. Information resources

This year for the fourth time Home Missions offered Reformation Day bulletins and other materials, which were used by 316 churches. Nearly half of these churches took a special offering for the cause of Home Missions. Home Missions also again offered Easter bulletins and devotional material, which were requested by 561 churches. Approximately 265 congregations scheduled an Easter offering for Home Missions.

Home Missions participated with other CRC agencies in several cooperative projects, such as *CRC Source*, a publication which provides

the churches with news about the ministries they support. Home Missions continues to work cooperatively in projects such as *Prayer Guide*, *Intermission*, the Barnabas Foundation, Women's Missionary Union speaking tours, and the scheduling of mailings.

2. Fiscal-year 1997 financial report

A detailed financial report for the twelve-month fiscal year ended June 30, 1998, the 1999 budget, and the purposed 2000 budget will be presented to synod in the *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement*. A summary report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1998, is shown below:

Source of income	Income (1,000s)	Percent of total
Ministry share	$5,307	65.8
Missionary support	822	10.2
Above-ministry-share gifts	1,102	13.7
Conferences, consulting	317	3.9
Interest and other	513	6.4
Total income	$8,061	

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Shawn Sikkkema, board president, and Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed Home Missions. Home Missions is blessed, privileged, and profoundly challenged in serving the Lord and the church through *Gathering*.

> Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
> John A. Rozeboom, executive director

Christian Reformed World Missions

I. Introduction

Empowered by the Spirit of Pentecost and with a vision for "salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47), Christian Reformed World Missions continues to proclaim the gospel and develop churches around the world. With gratitude to the Lord of the harvest, we report to synod on opportunities, efforts, and results during 1998-1999.

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) is one of the agencies serving the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). It is under the authority of and derives its task from the CRCNA. CRWM, therefore, works toward providing the fullness of God's grace in a broken world and seeks to bring glory to God. We are very thankful that the support for the work of World Missions continues to be strong.

During the past year World Missions gave support to twenty-nine Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which are attended by over two million people. World Missions also gave support to twenty other agencies and leadership-training institutions. In ten countries we are developing churches which are in various stages of formal organization. It is estimated that as a result of our efforts about fifty thousand are added to the fold each year.

About three hundred CRC missionaries are active in thirty countries. These include partners, associate missionaries (most of whom are teachers), and short-term missionary volunteers. During the summer months about thirty students are involved in our Summer Mission Program. At least ten work groups are sent annually to Latin American countries to assist with the building of churches, and last year World Missions gave support to the development of Christian-education systems in five countries.

II. Report on mission fields and projects

Africa

1. *Sierra Leone.* Rebels have destroyed the entire infrastructure for our ministry among the Kuranko and have pushed all the way to the capital city of Freetown. With the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and our national staff we are trying to determine how to respond in this difficult environment.

2. *Liberia.* Though civil war forced evacuation from Liberia a number of years ago, translation work continues on the Bassa translation of Scripture, which is on target for completion by July 1999.

3. *Nigeria.* Through our partnerships with churches in Nigeria, Nigerian evangelists joined the church-planting team and extended the witness in the Kambari region. Joint work with CRWRC in urban areas established Christian communities in Jos, Abuja, and Lagos.

4. *Mali.* Work continues among the Fulbe in western Mali. Three men, including the chief, have professed faith in Christ. The number of Fulbe Christians continues to increase gradually.

5. *Guinea.* Discipleship courses are being held for five individuals, evangelistic Bible studies with six individuals, and a Bible class for ten children. Worship services are held in Labé, Dalaba, and Conakry.

B. *Asia*

The economic bubble that has expanded significantly over the past years has now burst in many of the Asian countries. Though the falling currency (against the U.S. dollar) has helped World Missions, the weakening currencies and economies have taken a significant toll on the partner churches with which we work.

1. *Japan.* The staff feels what appears to be a backlash against the radical sects. Attendance has dropped for the first time in eight to ten years. The Reformed Church in Japan has about ten thousand members.

2. *Chinese ministries.* The People's Republic of China has asserted itself with the passing of Hong Kong from British control to that of the mainland. Persecution of church members and leaders appears to be on the increase again in some areas. World Missions continues to give significant support to the placement of teachers in mainland universities. These teachers can touch about five thousand students with a Christian witness.

3. *Guam and Micronesia.* World Missions saw the achievement of a $1 million goal in sales from the Faith Bookstore in 1998. World Missions also filled a significant role in the training of Micronesian church leaders by assisting the ministry of Pacific Islands Bible College.

4. *Philippines.* Our partner church, the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines, achieved the significant milestone of holding a meeting of its first synod and of appointing its first general secretary. This synod brought together the various linguistic and sociological groups which have made up the church. There are now thirty-five organized and about sixty emerging churches in the national church. World Missions' involvement in the Philippines moved significantly toward a support role. It is involved primarily in leadership training at formal and informal levels.

C. *Europe*

1. *France.* We renewed our agreement with the Evangelical Reformed Church in France to place a professor at the church's seminary.

2. *Hungarian ministries.* Leadership training and placement of teachers in church-run schools have been World Missions' strategy in this field. We consider it a privilege to give support to the Hungarian Reformed Church as it continues to rebuild after years of communism.

3. *Russia.* Our work here is part of an interagency ministry effort. Much of our ministry is centered on three reading rooms. More than two thousand people have registered to use these facilities, and more than thirty have made decisions for Christ.

D. *Latin America*

Our major story in Latin America in the past year was the destruction caused by hurricanes and our response to these destructive storms.

1. *Central America.* Hurricane Mitch caused great destruction in Honduras and Nicaragua. World Missions missionaries cooperated with CRWRC in meeting immediate needs and in planning to rebuild the homes that were destroyed. Although the internal struggles have not been resolved in the CRC of Honduras, World Missions has made plans to give support to two groups of churches to help them continue their evangelism and theological-education programs. The number of regular missionaries has been reduced from four to two. In El Salvador the year was spent in developing a strategy to cooperate with national partners in church planting and theological education. In Costa Rica the work of the CRC is in a time of transition as one new regular missionary has begun his work of replacing those who have left. The board of IMDELA (Missiological Institute of Latin America) has taken over a Christian university (UNELA), and World Missions is planning how to integrate its theological-education programs in Central America with IMDELA/UNELA.

2. *Cuba.* The vitality of the CRC of Cuba is shown in new members joining the churches, capable young leaders seeking training, and summer youth camps, which have grown each year. World Missions gave a grant of $40,000 especially for church construction and helped arrange the visit of eight teachers for training leaders.

3. *Dominican Republic.* Hurricane Georges struck with full force in areas where members of the CRC of the Dominican Republic live. World Missions cooperated with CRWRC and national leaders in providing immediate relief. The missionaries also used the emergency funds (up to $250,000) to rebuild many damaged and destroyed churches. In this effort many volunteer groups from the U.S. and Canada also gave valuable help. The missionaries are encouraged by the way in which the national church leaders are making progress in their diaconal programs and theological-education programs. Missionaries continue to teach in the evangelical university (UNEV), and at this time a missionary is rector of the university. The missionary who works with the Christian schools is an adviser to the national supervisors.

4. *Haiti.* The World Missions and CRWRC missionaries have formed one ministry team for Haiti. They have begun three new joint pilot projects. The three ministries of World Missions (theological education, teacher training, and publications) have been joined into one organization with the goal of helping the Haitian leaders to take more responsibility in the supervision and operation of these ministries. The teachers at Quisqueya Christian School are developing a Christian-service program for their students.

5. *Mexico.* There is a renewed emphasis on theological education by extension. In the Reformed Theological Seminary of Mexico (the new name of the former Juan Calvino Seminary in Mexico City) there are not many students (fifteen), but their work in the churches is outstanding. In San Pablo Seminary in Merida there is a good student body, and they work well in evangelism. In Tijuana the two organized churches and five congregations are growing steadily toward the goal of establishing a presbytery.

6. *Puerto Rico.* The three newly planted churches are growing well. A regular missionary has been named for a two-year term in order to encourage church growth.

7. *CIEE (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students).* World Missions continues to support Ruth Eldrenkamp, whose husband was killed by robbers while serving in Ecuador. She will move from Ecuador to Argentina in the important ministry of publishing sound Christian books in Latin America as a support to Christian university students.

8. *CITE (Cooperative International Theological Education).* The missionary of CITE worked in Cuba and Mexico during the past year. In Cuba she helped with the Christian-education programs of the CRC and helped organize and give counsel for the youth camps. In Mexico she gave advice to two Presbyterian Bible institutes in Chiapas that desired to reform their curricula. She also cooperates with CRC World Literature Ministries in the writing and editing of books in Spanish.

III.   Ministry in Canada and the U.S.A.

Whereas World Missions-International's major focus is field ministry, the ministry and plans of World Missions-U.S.A. and World Missions-Canada are focused on challenging the CRCNA to respond to the mission needs of the world. A positive working relationship continues to exist between the Burlington and Grand Rapids offices. Through a joint-venture agreement the two give administrative support to one world-missions outreach. This challenge involves developing a strong mission vision and a healthy connection between the church and its missionaries and mission programs.

A.   Network of prayer

World Missions recognizes that the power of prayer is what drives our ministry. Therefore, through all our contacts, both written and verbal, we continually challenge the church to be a praying church. Modern technology such as e-mail and fax machines provides exciting opportunities to make such prayer requests readily available and more meaningful. As staff we have attempted to model that focus on prayer in our personal lives and in our daily gatherings for a time of communal prayer.

B.   Mission vision

There is significant variation in the level of passion for mission ministry within our churches. Some, particularly the elderly, are very loyal and very mission minded. Others appear to be more interested in local initiatives. The real challenge that faces us in the future is nurturing a passion for the lost and suffering throughout the world in the hearts and minds of younger generations. Special initiatives are being taken to respond to this challenge.

We are excited about and encouraged by the number of churches that are partnering specifically with one or more of our missionaries. We recognize that the vision for mission can best be advanced through the stories and experiences of our missionaries. We are committed to building on that partnership.

C.   Partnership development

Pilot projects are presently underway between a group of churches, classes, or business groups and a specific country, field, or project. We hope that a

greater passion for and urgency about our mission ministry will grow as a result of such special partnerships.

D. Working together

Working and developing ministry together with the other CRC agencies and institutions is increasingly becoming a new reality for us. Doing so is both exciting and challenging.

E. Regional and local representatives

World Missions-Canada and World Missions-U.S.A. work through a network of regional and local-church representatives. Through seminars in each region we provide opportunities for representatives to share experiences about the mission ministry and to encourage each other. In seminars we also discuss new ways to make this great ministry become real and alive to the churches that we serve together. Exploration is presently underway in Canada to hold pilot seminars that would combine the efforts of all CRC mission agencies.

IV. Program report for recruiting and training

In the coming year, training programs will prepare approximately six long-term and seventy-five short-term people for missionary ministry. The following statistical summary shows how many CRC persons have worked, are working, or will be working in various missionary capacities from 1997 through 2000:

	FY1997-1998 Actual	FY1998-1999 Plan	FY1999-2000 Plan
Long-term missionaries	101	95	97
Missionary spouses	87	82	81
TOTAL:	188	177	178
Partner missionaries	56	61	67
SMP volunteers	30	34	46
Other volunteers	13	12	20
Seminary interns	2	4	6
Associate missionaries	36	34	27
TOTAL:	137	145	166
GRAND TOTAL:	325	322	344

It costs World Missions just under $65,000 to send and keep a long-term missionary family overseas for one year. About one-half of this support comes from denominational ministry shares. On average, eleven sending and supporting churches supply most of the other half through faith-promise or above-ministry-share support. Individuals can also support missionaries directly rather than through their local churches. Short-term partner missionaries, associate missionaries, and summer mission participants usually serve for one to two years and do not receive salaries from World Missions. They raise their own support (travel and living allowance) from churches and friends, support themselves, or, in the case of many partner missionaries, are supported by jobs in the countries to which they go.

All of our fields and 95 percent of our three hundred missionaries are connected via the Internet to the office and to each other. This technology

greatly increases the mission's ability for communication and distribution of mission news.

The names and address of our missionaries and regional representatives may be found on the back pages of the World Missions calendar. They are also listed in the Directory of Agencies and Committees of the CRC *Yearbook*, as are the names of World Missions' administrators.

Each year we give tribute to missionaries and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In 1998 we honored the following for five to thirty-five years of service with World Missions:

Mr. Allan and Mrs. Jaci Persenaire (Nigeria) 20 years
Rev. Albert and Mrs. Carolyn Strydhorst (Nigeria) 5 years
Dr. Stephen and Mrs. Lorrie Whatley (Philippines) 5 years
Mr. Howard and Mrs. Ruth Van Dam (Haiti) 5 years
Mr. Abe and Mrs. Carol Vreeke (Nigeria) 25 years
Rev. Neil and Mrs. Janie-Lou Culbertson (Guam) 15 years
Rev. Tom and Mrs. Yvonne De Vries (Philippines) 10 years
Dr. Martin and Mrs. Barbara Essenburg (Japan and Grand Rapids office) 25 years
Mr. Max and Mrs. Kina Van Til (Central America) 5 years
Mr. Gordon Buys (Nigeria and Grand Rapids office) 35 years
Miss Winabelle Gritter (Taiwan and Latin America) 35 years
Mr. David Radius (Grand Rapids office) 10 years
Miss Marcea Brouwer (Grand Rapids office) 25 years
Rev. Timothy and Mrs. Tammy Holwerda (Philippines) 5 years
Rev. Richard and Mrs. Sandy Sytsma (Japan) 30 years
Rev. Dick and Mrs. Carolyn Van Der Vorst (Dominican Republic) 5 years
Rev. Bernhard Vander Vlis (Nigeria) 5 years
Dr. Dick and Mrs. Anne Kwantes (Philippines) 30 years
Mr. John and Mrs. Angela Wagenveld (Puerto Rico) 5 years

V. Cooperation with other agencies

World Missions cooperates with The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, CRWRC, and Calvin Theological Seminary in a number of countries. Calvin Theological Seminary's Mission Institute provides World Missions with seminars and workshops for our missionaries, and many of our overseas seminaries benefit from short-term teaching by seminary professors, who also provide on-field seminars for some missionaries. This cooperation among the agencies includes the joint implementation of the strategic plan adopted by the denomination. Staff in the Canadian office has been very proactive in piloting various initiatives that focus on mobilizing the new ministry structure being implemented by the Canadian Ministries Board. Indications are that through a functional approach World Missions will be able to become more effective and efficient than it formerly was, especially in the area of church relations and communications.

VI. Governance and administration

The World Missions Committee will hold its annual meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 3-5, 1999, at which time the committees of World Missions-Canada and World Missions-U.S.A. will meet separately to attend to

mission matters particular to Canada and the U.S.A. and jointly to attend to the common task of governing and overseeing our mission fields and projects through World Missions-International. The executive committee meets jointly and separately in February (Canada), September (Grand Rapids), and December (Grand Rapids).

Consolidation of financial services has been completed. World Missions greatly appreciates the finance staff's excellent assistance and support.

VII. Long-range plan and fiscal 1999-2000

Copies of World Missions' Long-Range Plan are available on request. It describes our vision, mission, purpose, values, mission task, design of fields and projects, deployment guidelines and plans, strategic issues for effective mission, and the force for mission provided by the CRCNA. This plan has been updated and is being used to give shape to our three-year and our annual plans and budgets.

With the proposed budget for 1999-2000, World Missions plans to support 97 long-term missionaries (84 spouses, who volunteer much time to ministry) and 166 short-term missionaries (including spouses) for a total of 344 active missionaries, accompanied by many children. They will be supported by an administration of nineteen full-time and three part-time staff, based in Grand Rapids and Burlington. There are also fourteen regional representatives and their spouses, based in North America, who offer much support.

The budget from July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2000, will be $14,616,215. North American administrative and promotion expenses will be 11 percent of the budget. Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 1999— Financial and Business Supplement.*

VIII. Salary information

World Missions provides the following information about missionary salaries. In fiscal 1998-1999 the base salary for single missionaries is $21,068, and the base for married couples is $27,388. In addition, each missionary receives 1.1 percent of the single base salary for each year of applicable prior service for a maximum of twenty years (1.4 percent of base salary for each year of World Missions service). Educational allowances in the amount of 2.3 percent of single base salary for an M.A., 3.4 percent of single base salary for an M.Div., and 4.5 percent of single base salary for a Ph.D. are provided. World Missions provides assistance for educational costs of children. World Missions also provides U.S. Social Security payment or allowance and Canada pension payment; payments to denominational pension plans, which include disability insurance; worker's compensation insurance; medical and hospitalization costs; housing; an automobile or mileage reimbursement for overseas ministry; and a cost-of-living differential where applicable.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile
17	1	2nd quartile
16	4	2nd and 3rd quartile

IX. Recommendations

World Missions-Canada and World Missions-U.S.A. recommend the following:

A. That the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. Carel Geleynse; the president of World Missions-U.S.A., Rev. William Renkema; and the World Missions-International executive director, Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, be given the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and represent World Missions to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

B. That the Board of Trustees and synod continue World Missions on the list of denominational agencies recommended to the churches for one or more offerings.

C. That the Board of Trustees and synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

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Christian Reformed World Missions
Merle Den Bleyker, international director

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I. Introduction

CRWRC continues to be blessed in exciting ways. The year 1997-1998 was a year of living out the bold hope we have in Jesus Christ. Through programs in development, relief, and education, we saw signs of hope in the positive, permanent changes in the lives of our participants. We planted seeds of hope as our staff and partners transitioned into functionally and geographically based organizational teams. And we built on the legacy of hope reflected in Mr. John De Haan's twenty years of service and the appointment of Mr. Andrew Ryskamp as new director of CRWRC-U.S.A.

In the first six months of the 1998-1999 fiscal year, CRWRC was challenged to respond to needs caused by the devastation of Hurricane Georges and Hurricane Mitch in Central America. The CRC constituency responded, too, by entrusting us with $1.4 million of donations—double the amount we requested. Meanwhile, our regular development programs flourished, and we continued to build on organizational strengths and "learnings." Our long-range plan received much attention in 1998, and we believe that it is an expression of God's will for CRWRC. The main points of the long-range plan are reproduced here for synod's information.

A. CRWRC's vision

The vision of CRWRC is to equip an international church to redeem resources and use gifts so God's people can engage in the interdependent activities of love, mercy, and justice so that the poor, the community, and the body of believers can flourish.

B. CRWRC mission—Christians Reforming the World and Restoring Community

The mission of CRWRC is to increase the interdependent functioning of groups that work together to identify relief and development opportunities and solve relief and development problems so that the needy of the world can become complete persons in Christ.

C. Program emphases

In response to its core values, CRWRC engages in four program areas:

1. Development: To increase the capacity of organizations, communities, families, and individuals to achieve an improved quality of life that is sustainable.

2. Relief: To increase the capacity of disaster-struck communities to recover from and respond to disasters.

3. Justice education: To increase the capacity of churches to live out a Christ-like commitment to biblical justice and compassion.

4. Ministry development: To increase the capacity of the CRC constituency to carry out an informed and enthusiastic ministry to those who are economically impoverished.

D. Goals

As CRWRC carries out its work in these program areas, it seeks to increase, in the most cost-effective manner possible, the interdependent functioning of

community groups by collaborating with them to increase the capacities of all participants and to enable communities to become what God intends them to be. By the year 2002, 150,000 people in the communities in which we minister will have increased their capacity to express and use their God-given gifts in measurable and sustainable ways.

E. Strategies

CRWRC uses the following strategies when it allocates fiscal and personnel resources toward the attainment of its desired goals.

1. Building global collaborations: We help our needy neighbors help themselves through collaborating with various kinds of partners. This approach engages the capacity already present in each community in a way that upholds a community's culture and is appropriate to the context. We assume that both capacities and needs exist in each community, and we desire the enhancement and reformation of all involved. The collaborations we form, in addition to helping a community in need, should also increase the capacity of "communities" such as CRWRC, the CRCNA, and other Christian groups. Such collaborations may include

   a. Partnerships: Contracts with Christian community-development organizations in which CRWRC and other organizations agree to jointly plan and implement community-development programs in health, literacy, diaconal training, and economic empowerment. These partnerships also promote organizational capacity and accomplish specific objectives. They are in place for a stipulated length of time and entail written contracts about exchange of resources. These partnerships are a type of collaboration that will, in turn, foster relationships with new partners.

   b. Networks and affiliations: Memberships in and support for wider groupings of organizations whose purpose is to cooperate, communicate, coordinate, and collaborate together.

   c. Exchanges: Encounters between groups and individuals (such as informal relationships formed at assemblies) that allow expertise to be shared, dialogue to take place, and mutual learning to occur.

   d. Service learning: Opportunities for CRWRC supporters (individuals or small groups) to have joyful, life-changing learning experiences as they express their gratitude to God by demonstrating his love to the world through volunteer programs, on-site visits, or other personal involvement.

   e. Cooperation with other CRCNA agencies: Integration of work with our sister agencies in accord with synodical mandate and plans and out of a commitment to stewardship.

2. Disaster response

   We respond to natural and man-made disasters and emergencies by providing assistance throughout the world. During the relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction phases of disasters, we work in ways that maintain and/or build long-term community development and mitigate the effects of possible future disasters.

3. Justice education and advocacy

   a. We will promote justice within the CRWRC, among our supporters and fellow church members, and in the institutions of society that affect our work with the poor.

   b. We will work to build a CRC that understands the justice issues that impact our work (including human rights, gender equity, and building democratic systems) and is engaged appropriately in advocacy and reform.

   c. In the communities where we work, we will work with our partners to help build a civil society—a healthy social network of community-based organizations enabling participatory decision making, issue definition, and advocacy for the poor.

4. Capacity building through resource development
   Resource development must be fully integrated with program development and must involve donors and other partners in all steps of the process.

5. Church-ministry development
   We assist local church leaders in developing their capacity to be assets for sustainable change with poor people and poor communities.

II.   Committee and board matters
The primary function of the board is to provide oversight of the ministries on behalf of synod, to provide direction for the wholistic ministry program of the agency, and to encourage the vision for the organization as a whole.

CRWRC is composed of representatives from each of the classes of the Christian Reformed Church and several members-at-large. The board is organized into two divisions, one for Canada and one for the United States. The officers for the two national boards are listed below:

A.   *Officers of CRWRC-Canada*

   Mr. Peter Bulthuis, president
   Mr. Marvin De Vries, vice president
   Ms. Pauline Prins, secretary
   Mr. Lawrence De Graaf, treasurer
   Mr. Jack Feenstra, vice all

B.   *Officers of CRWRC-U.S.A.*

   Mr. Calvin Hulst, president
   Ms. Carol Van Ess-Dykema, vice president
   Ms. Kay Yoder, secretary
   Mr. Barry Haven, treasurer

III.   CRWRC's programs and ministries

A.   *Development regions*
CRWRC's geographic ministry teams are setting out signposts of the kingdom among the poor in East Africa, West Africa, Asia, Latin America, and North America. Presently, Eastern Europe, particularly Romania, is also

becoming a zone of ministry for CRWRC in cooperation with the other agencies of the CRC. In all these places CRWRC tries to introduce changes that build skills, lend resources, point people to Jesus, and give hope, transforming lives in the process. CRWRC's programs continue to specialize in child health, adult literacy, credit, and agriculture. These are introduced through the community-development process, in which groups within villages and towns throughout the world identify their needs, express their vision, choose leaders, get training, and work on their problems and opportunities.

CRWRC is taking the lead in building connections with new partners and interested CRWRC supporters. All have skills, talents, and resources to contribute—many in a volunteer capacity—whether the arena of their service is disaster relief in North America or a women's self-help group in Bangladesh. One group of church-member participants that is increasingly making a contribution to our mission is the business and professional community. Through CRWRC's affiliate organization Partners for Christian Development, members of this community are learning about the needs of the poor and are giving their time, expertise, and financial support to CRWRC's ministries around the world. Their gifts are especially essential for promoting economic development in the communities where CRWRC is active.

If a recent CRWRC proposal to the U.S. Agency for International Development is accepted, it will allow us, beginning in October of 1999, to test ways in which economic development and community development can be better joined to bring enduring change to poor communities. The program would be implemented in four target countries: Bangladesh, Haiti, the Philippines, and South Africa. Funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Canadian International Development Agency continues to help CRWRC sustain certain programs, learn from the broader Christian and secular development community, and test new approaches to the development process.

The places where CRWRC works are often marked by political turmoil, economic chaos, oppression of women and minorities, and environmental degradation. These conditions—together with religious and ethnic conflict, the AIDS epidemic, the movement of refugees, and corruption in high places—make our task complex. They are why we pay attention to the need for justice as well as for community development and why we always seek to work through partnerships rather than alone—whether it is with our sister agencies like World Missions or with other Christian groups.

Last year we reported a concern that a reduction of staff in our ministry regions had gone too far, spreading the remaining staff too thin. Although it is true, as we said last year, that finding staff with the necessary skills and experience is difficult, God has blessed us with an excellent corps of new missionaries. As a result, most gaps have been filled. CRWRC's service and training program, whereby young college graduates serve with CRWRC for two years and get a strong dose of training and mentoring, has provided us with good candidates for long-term service. We would like to strengthen this program. CRWRC has also been blessed with outstanding national staff within the regions and countries where we serve—staff who in many cases hold responsibilities equivalent to those who come from North America.

In every region, CRWRC staff members work with deacons of churches, helping them to strengthen their ministry to their congregations and their

neighbors. Through this ministry we express our commitment to the mission of the local church and to the wholistic integration of word and deed.

The major restructuring CRWRC has been undergoing in the last two years—moving to a team-based design to make us more responsive, flexible, and effective in an increasingly complex environment characterized by constant change—accounts for the fall-off we saw last year in the number of participants in our development programs, to a worldwide total of 77,823. This effect was not surprising. Indeed, experts in organizational change predict a temporary decrease in performance during such a transition because major change is inevitably disruptive—something like remodeling a store while you remain open for business (see *The Wisdom of Teams* by Katzenbach and Smith). Fortunately, the "remodeling" has resulted in faster decision making, more responsiveness to donors and the poor, and the empowerment of staff. Presently, the development-program results below show a return to greater productivity, with the number of participants rising in 1997-1998 to a total of 92,425.

Geographic Ministry Team	Partner Organizations in Region	1997-98 Projected Participants	1997-98 Actual Participants
East Africa	21	51,400	40,857
West Africa	18	12,336	10,404
Asia	15	23,422	23,876
Latin America	27	13,590	14,582
North America	16	1,365	2,706
Total Served	97	102,113	92,425

In a report to CRWRC's board of delegates at the end of 1997-1998, we made these summary observations:

> God has richly blessed CRWRC and her service partners, allowing us together to help over 90,000 participants grow in income, health, literacy, and in other ways—perhaps more importantly, in confidence and dignity as image-bearers of God. And we have been able to help even more people in the last year through disaster relief, training classes, and short-term projects.

> . . . . .

> The number of partner agencies remains about the same [as in 1996-1997], while the number of participants in our programs has risen, and now equals pre-transition levels. The recent semi-annual reports from Geographic Ministry Team staff members were markedly improved in focus, clarity and sense of accounta-bility. There is greater clarity of purpose in the supporting functional teams [Program, Administration, Communications, and Resource Development]. New energy is flowing into the organization from sister CRC agencies, Partners for Christian Development, constituents, volunteers, and colleagues in the broader relief and development community.

B. Justice education, advocacy, and service learning

Involvement is a key objective of CRWRC's justice-education program. CRWRC seeks to involve church members in the lives and struggles of communities in poverty.

Christian Reformed people are getting involved. Over two thousand young people and adults built relationships within needy communities through last year's short-term service projects; fifty-one people attempted to understand world hunger as they shared a meager meal with a community in need through Discovery Tours.

We are presently involved in opportunities to put North American business and professional expertise to work with entrepreneurs in the developing world through efforts such as

- Fish farming in El Salvador
- A recycling/waste project in the Philippines
- Matching a West Michigan business group with a micro credit program in Indonesia
- Bringing a North American grocery entrepreneur together with a Haitian grocer

We're getting involved in faithfully remembering the poor in worship during World Hunger Week. In 1997-1998 the world-hunger educational campaign raised close to a half-million dollars.

We're getting involved in standing with the poor by letter writing to our elected officials. Furthermore, we have learned that we have specialized knowledge that is often useful to people who have the power and authority to make change on a global scale, and we have learned that it is important to be active on global issues even as we work at the community level. Some of our effects on global issues include the following:

- CRWRC and other denominational staff members presented information to the United Nations and U.S. government officials regarding the situation in Sierra Leone. This effort resulted in U.S. House and Senate resolutions calling the world's attention to the plight of the people in Sierra Leone.
- Staff in West Africa strengthen organizations through a Pan-African education network.
- We're publishing a popular education booklet on environmental law in the Fulfulde language.
- In North America CRWRC staff, together with our partners and communities, participate in the Community Reinvestment Act coalition in the Chicago area.
- Our work in Haiti, which is carried out in conjunction with World Missions and Partners for Christian Development, is becoming a model for the integration of justice concerns and service learning.
- Partners for Christian Development volunteers advocated on behalf of Haitians cheated in large commercial ventures.
- In East Africa staff and partners examined the role of the church in raising awareness about a civil society and constitutional rights.
- In Tanzania participants of the Mwanza Urban Savings and Credit Program urged the local government to follow established laws so that participants would not be exploited by local government leaders through unjust taxes.
- Our work with women's groups includes supporting women's right to own property within the Maasai.

– In Asia our attention has been focused on developing a national association of Christian development organizations in the Philippines. This group will serve as a national tool for advocacy, as the U.S. InterAction and the Canadian Council of Christian Charities do.

We are involved with other denominational agencies in the work of the denominational Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action. We work closely with World Missions in addressing international justice issues, such as in Cuba and Sierra Leone. CRWRC continues to offer strong leadership in antiracism activities within the denomination.

Christian Reformed people are learning that when the church in North America works together with local communities and churches around the world, the CRC is practicing its core values of restoration, reconciliation, and biblical justice.

C. Relief

In 1998 the needs of victims of natural and man-made disasters were brought to the attention of CRWRC as never before. In his goodness the Lord also gave us the resources to help as never before. Linkages with and support from other denominations and organizations focused on relief efforts are growing. In Canada, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is branching out to include nonfood programming as well as its well-known food donations. Support from the CRC and other Reformed churches is strong. Cooperation with the Canadian International Development Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other organizations like Dorcas International opens additional opportunities.

For Disaster Response Services (DRS), our key relationships in Canada and the United States include Mennonite Disaster Services, Church World Service, the Reformed Church in America, and several others through our membership in the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

Disaster Response Services in Canada and the U.S.A. have completed the following response efforts:

Flooding	Manitoba, California
Storms	Ontario, Quebec, and Michigan
Tornadoes	Arkansas, Alabama, and Minnesota

The following efforts are ongoing:

Hurricane Georges	Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and Texas
Flooding	North Dakota, Minnesota, and Texas
Tornadoes	Tennessee

In 1997-1998, 1,530 volunteers worked enough hours to equal the hours of forty people working full-time for a year in needs assessment, clean-up, minor and major repairs, and total home rebuildings. We worked with eleven community-based interfaith organizations to achieve this.

In international relief several responses were concentrated in areas affected by drought or floods resulting from the El Nino and La Nina weather systems. In the Philippines, Myanmar, Peru, Columbia, Mexico, and Bangladesh small programs were formulated to respond to immediate needs created by floods and droughts. In the Sudan we were able to provide a child-feeding program for victims of the drought and civil war. CRWRC has committed a total of $550,000 (U.S.) for the rebuilding of houses, development of gardens, and the replanting of trees in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Another $2 million (Can.) of food, programmed as food for work through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank facility, is supplied as part of this program. Partner organizations have offered an additional $400,000 (Can.) to support this effort.

In the Ukraine, plans to react to the dramatic flooding are being formulated. The response will include a food shipment through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and cash for the rebuilding of houses. Ukrainian Hungarian Reformed and Baptist churches, working with staff members of Christian Reformed World Missions and the Hungarian office of Dorcas International, will be the local partners. Support will come from CRWRC, Dorcas, Canadian Baptist Ministry, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, which is the host denomination of the Hungarian Reformed Churches in Canada.

D. Canadian Foodgrains Bank

As one of thirteen church-based members for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank Association, CRWRC annually commits $250,000 (Can.) to its account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. During the past year these funds, together with funds committed by our Canadian Foodgrains Bank partners to projects and programs initiated and managed by CRWRC and matched by funds from the Canadian International Development Agency, amounted to more than $3.3 million (Can.). Increasingly, overseas staff of CRWRC and World Missions are involved in the realization of these programs.

Food-for-work and food-distribution programs took place in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and North Korea. Large shipments, supported by several other Canadian denominations, are on their way to CRWRC partners in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic for the victims of hurricanes Mitch and Georges. In North Korea the total spending of the joint Canadian Foodgrains Bank partners has now passed the $12 million (Can.) mark. Our efforts to introduce double cropping in this country are continuing.

Support for CRWRC work with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is overwhelming. Contributions in grain and cash are received from all congregations in Canada, with increasing contributions from the Canadian Reformed, Independent, Free, and other Reformed churches. Growing Projects, whereby members of several local churches come together to grow a crop with proceeds going to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, have increased from 5 to more than 250 during the last four years. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank has become an organization in which CRWRC and its partners, locally, nationally, and internationally, can celebrate our unity in Christ.

E. Community services

CRWRC-Canada is involved in ServiceLink, a CRC program in Canada which has encouraged the expansion of volunteers in ministry. Currently there

are eight regional coordinators of volunteers and a program coordinator (staff) who provide a "one-stop information resource" to groups and individuals who wish to volunteer with any CRC agency.

During the 1997-1998 year, 305 ServiceLink volunteers served a combined total of 16,354 hours for various agencies, including CRWRC, World Missions, The Back to God Hour, Home Missions, and Youth Unlimited. For the first six months of 1998-1999, eighty-eight volunteers, including forty-four new ones, have already served a total of 7,248 hours. Included in these statistics are fifteen adult and youth groups from various churches across Canada.

Strategic planning has begun to develop a similar ServiceLink program in the United States. For this fiscal year, CRWRC's North American Geographic Ministry Team will provide regional resource people to link church members with local ministry opportunities.

IV. Finance

A. Financial history
The graph on the following page displays CRWRC revenues and expenses from 1992 to 2000 (projected).

B. Salary disclosure
In accordance with synod's mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd quartile
16	5	1st quartile

C. Detailed financial information
Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement.*

V. Resource development
CRWRC continues to be blessed with the resources it needs to carry out its ministries on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church.

The 1997-1998 fiscal year was a good year for support of CRWRC's main program in community development as well as for its disaster and relief work. Budget targets were met, and a surplus was assigned to program and disaster-response reserves. We are very grateful for the continued faithful support. In the U.S. about two-thirds of CRWRC's support comes directly from individual and business gifts; the remaining one-third is received through church giving. In Canada, excluding grants from the Canadian International Development Agency, the opposite is true: One-third comes from individuals and direct gifts; two-thirds is received through church giving. CRWRC recognizes that church giving has been declining and therefore requests synod again to urge churches to schedule a minimum of four offerings per year to support CRWRC in lieu of ministry shares.

In the area of government funding and foundation grants, CRWRC received $1,140,000 (Can.) from the Canadian International Development Agency; $314,733 (U.S.) from the U.S. Agency for International Development;

CRWRC - Consolidated
Revenue and Expense History Budgets
(including Disasters)

	92/93 Actual	93/94 Actual*	94/95 Actual	95/96 Actual	96/97 Actual	97/98 Actual	98/99 Budget	99/00 Budget
Revenue	10,468	8161	9,525	9,577	11,056	11,113	9,630	10,699
Expenses								
Overseas	5,432	4,312	5,906	5,488	5,548	5,000	5,610	6,420
North America	611	917	1,245	918	815	778	810	876
Disaster Response	1,457	1,288	1,984	936	1,674	1,822	803	805
Education				243	190	94	279	331
Resource Development	762	743	999	875	963	1,053	1,079	1,122
Administration	834	750	1,058	968	932	1,183	909	991
Total Expenses	9,096	8,010	11,192	9,430	10,142	9,930	9,490	10,545
Net Revenue (Expense)	1,372	151	(1,667)	147	914	1,183	140	154

* 10 months
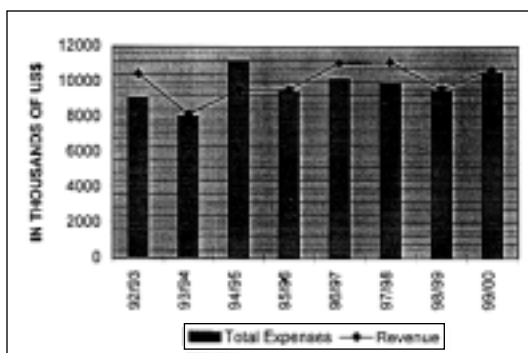
and $513,409 (U.S.) from others. In 1997-1998 CRWRC-Canada contributed $615,000 (Can.) of disaster relief aid, which, when matched by Canadian Foodgrains Bank partners and the Canadian International Development Agency, amounted to relief responses of $2,697,000 (Can.).

Bequests received by CRWRC are normally placed in the Joseph Fund and are recognized as revenue over a seven-year term. This fund has grown substantially and was able to make a contribution to CRWRC's operating budget of $294,200 (U.S.) at the beginning of the current fiscal year.

Many members and supporters of CRWRC have made project-site visits and have been involved as volunteers, especially with Disaster Response Services in response to hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and ice storms. Partners for Christian Development also continues to grow and receive enthusiastic support from the business community.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Calvin Hulst, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Peter Bulthuis, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andy Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Mr. Wayne deJong, director of CRWRC-Canada, when CRWRC matters are discussed.

B. That CRWRC missionaries who are presently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

C. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year for CRWRC in lieu of ministry-share support.

D. That synod approve the following seven nominations, elect one board member for each open position, and extend the term of board member Peter Bulthuis.

Member-at-large (CRWRC-Canada)
    Ms. Barbara Hoekstra is currently an alternate member-at-large for the board of CRWRC-Canada. She has recently completed her master's degree in landscape architecture. She was formerly a U.S. board member before moving to Canada six years ago. She currently works for Prism Resource Management as a land-resource manager.
    Mr. James Mutoigo is a lawyer in Burlington, Ontario. He is a member and elder of Immanual CRC in Hamilton. He has served as a member of the Racial Reconciliation Committee and as an ethnic adviser to the CRC synod. Mr. Mutoigo became involved with CRWRC through his wife, Ida Kaastra, who worked for CRWRC in Uganda for nine years. In Uganda he provided valuable legal advice for CRWRC at that time.

Extension of member-at-large (CRWRC-Canada)
    Mr. Peter Bulthuis is the vice principal of Smithville District Christian High School and is a geography teacher with a keen interest in environmental issues. He is a member of Grimsby CRC. He has served two terms as a member-at-large for CRWRC (1993-1999) and served as president during the last year. CRWRC requests that Mr. Bulthuis's term be extended by one year in order to stagger the terms of the three members-at-large (Canada), who currently all complete their terms at the same time.

Member-at-large (pastoral adviser) (CRWRC-Canada)
    Rev. Roy Berkenbosch is associate pastor for campus ministry and dean of students at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alberta. He attends Inglewood CRC in Edmonton. Rev. Berkenbosch has served as CRWRC field director in Bangladesh (1990-1992), as pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1992-1995), and as pastoral adviser to the CRWRC-U.S.A. Committee (1992-1995).
    Rev. John Koster is pastor of First CRC, Richmond, British Columbia (since 1994). He is currently serving as alternate pastoral adviser to the CRWRC-Canada Committee. Originally from Australia, he has extensive knowledge of Asia, especially Indonesia, where he served for a number of years and which he recently visited on behalf of CRWRC.

Member-at-large (financial adviser) (CRWRC-U.S.A.)
    Mr. Randall J. Kroll is a member of Faith CRC, New Brighton, Minnesota. He is a certified public accountant and a shareholder in the firm of Wilkerson, Guthmann, and Johnson, Ltd., where he specializes in services to not-for-profit organizations. He is a 1980 graduate of Dordt College with a degree in business administration. Mr. Kroll previously served on the CRWRC board and was a member of its executive committee.

Mr. Steve Penning is a member of Plymouth Heights CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served on council. He is a partner in Lettinga and Associates, an accounting firm based in Grand Rapids. A graduate of Calvin College, he is a certified public accountant and a member of the national and state C.P.A. associations.

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Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andy Ryskamp, CRWRC-U.S.A. director
Wayne deJong, CRWRC-Canada director

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Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund concentrates its efforts in the United States; the Canadian churches have their own similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan-approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities, sold primarily to members of the Christian Reformed Church.

II. Board of directors

The terms of Ms. Arlissa Joseph and Mr. Gerard Borst expire on June 30, 1999. The board requests synod to elect two board members from the following nominees for terms indicated:

A. Position 1 - elect one for a three-year term through June 2002

Mr. Gordon Bruinsma is a member of Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as a Sunday-school teacher and chairman of the council. He is chief financial officer of the Granger Group of companies and president of Gordon-Richard Realtors. He currently serves on the board of Mission-India. A graduate of the University of Michigan, Mr. Bruinsma is a certified public accountant.

Mr. James Fredricks is a member of Georgetown CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan, where he is an administrative elder. He is a graduate of Calvin College and is president of West Michigan Community Bank. Mr. Fredricks previously served on the Board of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

B. Position 2 - elect one for a three-year term through June 2002

Mr. Pedro Luis Fernandez is a member of Iglesia Buenas Nuevas (Good News) CRC, Miami, Florida, where he has served as a deacon. He is the former co-owner of JP Mortgage, Inc. Mr. Fernandez is a graduate of Florida Christian School and the Florida School of Mortgage. He is assistant baseball coach at Miami Christian School.

Ms. Arlissa Joseph (incumbent) is budget manager for La Salle National Bank, Chicago, Illinois. She has served on church council as deacon and church-board secretary. She is a member of Pullman CRC, Chicago, Illinois.

The remaining members of the Loan Fund board of directors are Mr. Jon Feikens (2000), Mr. Curtis Witte (2000), Rev. Gerard Dykstra (2001), and Ms. Jany Admiraal-Nykamp (2001).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in the District of Columbia and in twenty-eight states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island,

South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 1998) a total of $9,223,375 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to ten years, and interest rates vary from 5.5 percent to 7.5 percent, with a time-weighted average of 6.75 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. To date, over three hundred requests for loan information have been received from various Christian Reformed churches in the United States; more than ninety loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 1998, a total of $10,238,575 (U.S.) was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and minimal.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data (U.S. and Canada consolidated):

	1996	1997	1998
Cash and equivalents	$839,611	$1,501,525	$2,313,299
Loans and accounts receivable	$9,835,476	$10,310,664	$10,306,190
Total assets	$10,675,087	$11,812,189	$12,619,489
Notes and accounts payable	$7,597,047	$8,627,416	$9,302,485
Net assets	$3,078,040	$3,184,773	$3,317,004
Total liabilities and net assets	$10,675,087	$11,812,189	$12,619,489

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 1998, will appear in the *Agenda for Synod 1999—Financial and Business Supplement.*

IV. **Sources of funding**
    Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

A. The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained.

B. The gradual liquidation of non-interest-bearing notes of the former Christian Reformed Church Help Committee, which was dissolved December 31, 1983. The balance of these notes as of June 30, 1998, was $19,920 (U.S.).

C. Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.

D. Bank loans and interagency borrowing so long as these are consistent with the corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws. The Loan Fund currently does not have any outstanding bank loans or interagency borrowing.

V. **Staff**
    The Loan Fund is served by Mrs. Ethel Schierbeek (80 percent of full time) and Mr. Carl Gronsman, who also provides support to CRC Home Missions as a member of the CRCNA Financial Services staff.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund's executive director or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod approve the four nominees and elect two of the four to serve on the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

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Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Carl. A. Gronsman, executive director

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Fund for Smaller Churches

I. Organization

The Fund for Smaller Churches Committee is composed of three lay people and two ministers, in keeping with previous synodical decisions. The present membership is as follows: Mr. Arthur Ruiter (1999), president; Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema (1999), secretary; Mr. Henry F. Eizenga (2001); Mr. Jack Folkerts (2000), treasurer; and Rev. Lester Van Essen (1999).

Mr. Jack Folkerts was elected by Synod 1997. He was duly elected to the office of treasurer at the September 1997 meeting of the committee.

II. Work of the committee

Statistics for the calendar year 1998:

Applications processed	59 (83 in 1997, 87 in 1996)
Assistance granted	58 (some provisionally)
Average size of congregation	67 confessing members 18+
Educational allowances granted	13

III. Developments in the ministry of the Fund for Smaller Churches

At this writing the FSC Committee has completed an entire year since its decision to cease and desist with its mission and mandate. Since that time the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA has appointed an ad hoc committee to develop a plan to transfer the FSC mission and mandate to Home Missions.

The work of that ad hoc committee is now finished (see Board of Trustees report), and the FSC Committee wholeheartedly endorses the plan and process for making the transfer described in that document. The committee members are convinced that such a transfer is in the best interest of the denomination as a whole. We think it is the stewardly thing to do in view of all the issues brought to light in the ad hoc committee's report.

The committee takes this opportunity to inform the denomination that an unprecedented number of churches (five) have fallen below the minimum number for continued financial support (fifty confessing members over 18) during the past year. In each of these cases the committee has encouraged the local church to consider alternative models of ministry. It is hoped that all these congregations will be able to continue as viable churches of Jesus Christ, even under different circumstances.

The following alternative models are being offered to these churches:

A. Bivocational ministry: The pastor works part-time in the ministry and is permitted to seek other gainful employment for the purposes of meeting family needs.

B. Multipoint parish: The pastor serves two or more congregations at the same time.

C. Shared ministry as an "associate" pastor. In this model the pastor is on staff of a larger neighboring church and also works part-time for the smaller church.

Each of these alternative models has been much in use throughout the evangelical church over the years. We think these alternative models offer a great deal of flexibility for the future of many of our smaller churches. We recommend them for consideration and invite church visitors to encourage the very smallest CRC churches to consider these models. It is hoped that, by using these other approaches, these churches can continue vibrant and God-glorifying ministry in the communities where they are located.

IV. Recommendations

A. That the FSC secretary and treasurer be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered either by synod or its advisory committee and that they be given the privilege of the floor. In the absence of either, we request the same privilege for other members of the committee.

B. That the minimum salary for ministers serving churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at $31,500 ($30,000 in 1999) and that Canadian minimum salary be set at $31,500 x 120% = $37,800 (see K below).

C. That a service increment be paid according to the following scale:

   $100 per year of service for years 1-10
   $150 per year of service for years 11-20
   $200 per year of service for years 21 and up

D. That a child allowance of $600 continue to be granted for every unmarried child up to age 19 (age 23 if enrolled full-time at an educational institution in an undergraduate program).

E. That automobile expenses be reimbursed at the rate of .31 per mile (.31 per kilometer in Canada) times the percentage of ministry-share reduction granted (80 minus # of families = % reimbursement rate).

F. That an allowance of $4,259 be granted each congregation which provides its minister with health/dental/life insurance. Insurance coverage of the pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

G. That salary allowance for stated supply be set at $400 per week in the U.S. and $480 per week in Canada (see 10 below).

H. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be not less than $400 per communicant member for 2000 and, if possible, more.

I. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC pay a Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastor in the amount of at least $3,150. Canadian congregations are encouraged to contribute similar amounts toward the pastor's medical expenses by means of a medical allowance for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

J. That FSC churches in the U.S. be assisted in the Social Security/Medicare offset in the amount of $2,250 in 2000. This shall also be granted to Canadian churches provided the amount is designated for similar expenses.

K. That a cost-of-living differential of 20 percent be added to the minimum

salary and allowances paid to pastors serving Canadian congregations assisted by FSC. The Canadian churches shall also contribute at a rate of 120 percent of the per communicant member contribution rate established for the U.S. churches for 2000 ($480).

Grounds:
1. The disparity in the cost of living between the U.S. and Canada makes such an adjustment necessary.
2. Other denominational agencies give a differential to those employed in Canada.
3. The precipitous drop in the value of the Canadian dollar warrants this adjustment.

L. That synod declare the continuing-education allowance for pastors in smaller churches to continue at $400 for 2000. We note that all pastors of churches with fewer than fifty families are eligible to apply for these funds. This educational allowance is not limited to those pastors serving churches receiving FSC grants.

M. That synod approve a Christian-education allowance of $800 per child for each child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, for 2000.

N. That the ministry share for the Fund for Smaller Churches be set at $5.00 per year per communicant member over age 18.

O. That synod approve the plans to dissolve the FSC Committee as it is currently mandated and managed and shift its mandate and mission to Home Missions.

Grounds:
1. Current staffing structures within Home Missions enhance the accountability component of recently implemented funding criteria.
2. The change conforms to recent synodical decisions to encourage consolidation of agencies and programs.
3. The change promotes the objective of strategic application of financial resources to vital and vibrant ministries.
4. The change promotes greater stewardship of ministry-share funds given in good faith by CRC members.
5. The change accommodates the fundamental shift in the funding objectives for the agencies. The denomination will not be subsidizing salary. Rather, it will be assisting with the funding of ministry development in the smaller churches.

P. In the event that Recommendation O (above) is approved by synod, we recommend

That the terms of service of all current members of the FSC Committee be extended to the date when FSC ceases to function.

Q. In the event that synod does not approve Recommendation O (above), we recommend

That synod elect three members to replace retiring FSC Committee members:

Rev. Lester Van Essen is completing his first term of office and is eligible to serve a second term. According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure his name is being submitted as a single nominee.

Rev. Lester Van Essen is pastor of First CRC in Lansing, Illinois. He has served the denomination as a dedicated and effective missionary in Nigeria for twenty years. He has also served the CRC in Burbank, Illinois.

Note: Nominees to replace Rev. Lambert Sikkema and Mr. Arthur Ruiter have not yet been identified. The nominees and pertinent information about them will be included in the supplementary agenda, provided to delegates in early June.

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Fund for Smaller Churches
Lambert Sikkema, secretary

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I. Introduction

Pastoral Ministries is both the youngest and the smallest of the denominational agencies. It was established in 1995 with the merger of these standing committees: Chaplain Committee, Committee on Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations Committee, and the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR). At about the same time, synod decided to establish an office of Abuse Prevention. These five ministries then became the responsibility of the Pastoral Ministries Board.

Despite the significance of the individual ministries, it has been difficult to develop a common vision for the agency as a whole. The question has been repeatedly asked whether these are five ministries functioning within and under one administrative structure and board or whether the emphasis ought to be on one agency with five ministry focuses. While the distinction may escape the casual observer, how one answers that question determines how one evaluates the effectiveness of the agency as a whole. The Pastoral Ministries Board is continuing to refine its own answer to this question.

During the course of this past year the board decided to move in the direction of consolidating the agency's ministries by appointing a full-time executive director. Ms. Beth Swagman had served as the executive director on a part-time basis (20 percent) until July 1, 1998, at which time she returned to full-time duty as the director of Abuse Prevention. When the board proposed the hiring of a full-time executive director, the Board of Trustees declined to approve that proposal. Discussions are continuing at the time of this writing regarding how best to provide for the leadership this agency needs.

The board has also been discussing a strategic plan for serving the needs of congregations more effectively. That discussion is also continuing.

II. The board

A. *Members, meetings, nominations*

The board is composed of fifteen members representing various geographic regions of the denomination. The officers of the board are Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman; Rev. Robert Heerspink, vice chairman; and Rev. Edward Tamminga, secretary. The other board members are Mrs. Diane Algera, Mr. Henry Bosch, Mr. Gerry Bosma, Mrs. Mary Bouma, Dr. Daniel De Witt, Rev. Juan Flores, Mrs. Mary Hollebeek, Mr. Peter Szto, Dr. John te Linde, Ms. Carol Topp, Rev. Stanley Verheul, and Dr. Joe Wilson. The board organizes its work into several committees—executive/personnel committee, finance committee, program committee, and Canadian-ministries committee.

Corporately, Pastoral Ministries functions under the umbrella of the Board of Trustees, and the Pastoral Ministries' budget is a subsection of the Denominational Office's budget. The Pastoral Ministries Board has met twice since last synod. The spring meeting is scheduled for April 1999.

The following board members will be completing their second terms on June 30, 1999: Dr. Daniel J. De Witt, Rev. Edward Tamminga, and Rev. Charles Terpstra. The board is pleased to present the following nominations for synod's consideration:

1. *Rev. Michael Abma* is pastor of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served since 1998.

   Rev. Carl Kammeraad is copastor of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served since 1982.

2. *Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma* is pastor of Trinity CRC, Mount Pleasant, Michigan, where she has served since 1997. She also serves on the synodical Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members.

   Rev. Nicholas Vander Kwaak is a chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He presently serves as an alternate on the board. He served on the synodical Committee to Study Abuse Situations (1989-1994) and on the interim Abuse Prevention Committee (1995). He is a member of Hillside Community CRC, Cutlerville, Michigan.

3. *Rev. Evert Gritter* is pastor of Edson-Peers CRC, Edson, Alberta, where he has served since 1997. He presently serves as an alternate on the Pastoral Ministries Board.

   Mr. Gerald Thaxton has worked as a rehabilitation specialist and is presently serving on the Habitat for Humanity Board. He is a member of Northside Community Chapel CRC, Paterson, New Jersey, and he serves as an alternate member of the board.

   The following two board members and alternates are completing their first terms. These nominees are being presented for reelection according to the new rules adopted by Synod 1998.

4. *Rev. Stanley E. Ver Heul* (delegate) has served as pastor of Community CRC in Los Angeles, California, since 1980. He has been an active member of the Southern California Race Relations Committee and has a strong commitment to a multiethnic ministry in Los Angeles.

   Rev. Vernon Vander Zee (alternate) has served as pastor of Lombard CRC, Lombard, Illinois, since 1989. He presently serves as regional pastor for Classis Northern Illinois. He has been active in various classical committees.

5. *Mr. John te Linde* (delegate) works as a psychologist for the city of Calgary, Alberta. His profession involves him in social issues, including aboriginal needs and family abuse. Mr. te Linde is a member of First CRC, Calgary, Alberta, where he has served on council.

   Mr. Bert Zwiers (alternate) has served with Disability Concerns for a number of years. He worked for several years as chief estimator for large construction firms. Mr. Zwiers is a member of Faith CRC, Burlington, Ontario.

   The following nominations are for the one-year unexpired term of Mrs. Ruth Fox:

6. *Mr. Pedro Delgado* is the owner/operator of a driveway and patio cleaning and sealing business in Miami, Florida. He is a member of the Buenas Nuevas CRC in Miami, Florida, where he presently serves as an elder.

Mr. Jose Lopez is a social worker with Miami-Dade County. He is a member of Good Samaritan CRC, Miami, Florida, where he presently serves as a deacon.

B. Salary disclosure

In compliance with the requirements of synod, the following salary information is provided:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
15	5	2nd and 3rd quartile

C. Interim-ministry-specialist proposal

The Pastoral Ministries Board carefully reviewed a proposal to initiate a new ministry position in support of vacant congregations. The proposal is fully described in Appendix A of this report, and it is recommended that synod approve the proposal for implementation and provide the funding for it as proposed in the ministry-share recommendation for fiscal year 2000.

III. The programs of Pastoral Ministries

A. Abuse Prevention (Ms. Beth A. Swagman, director)

1. Work accomplished during the past year

   – Seminars, training, and conferences conducted in/for Grand Rapids, Michigan; Grand Haven, Michigan; Holland, Michigan; Bellflower, California; Valley Christian Schools; Calvin College; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Plainwell, Michigan; Cutlerville, Michigan; Christian Reformed World Missions; Red Deer, Alberta; London, Ontario; Sarnia, Ontario; Christian Service Club; Kingston, Ontario; Chandler, Arizona; Abbotsford, British Columbia; Hudsonville, Michigan; Byron Center, Michigan; Moline, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; Woodynook, Alberta; Edmonton, Alberta; Fremont, Michigan.
   – Training of six additional abuse-response teams, one each in Classis Northern Michigan, Classis Eastern Canada, Classis British Columbia-Northwest, Classis Alberta North, and Classis Quinte and one for Classes Heartland, Minnesota South, and Iakota.
   – Consultations with numerous pastors, church leaders, classes representatives, principals, school-board members, and parachurch organizations when allegations of abuse or misconduct became known.
   – Support and advice given to persons who have experienced abuse, extended family members of persons abused or abusing, and others connected to incidents of abuse or misconduct having occurred recently or in the past.
   – Distribution upon request of 132 packets with sample abuse-prevention policies, distribution upon request of nearly 25 packets of other resources to churches and individuals, distribution of brochures on domestic violence to nearly 150 churches in four classes, distribution of nearly ten thousand brochures explaining the advisory-panel process to churches in four classes.

2. Challenges to the ministry

Reports of alleged abuse by church leaders and church members are received on a weekly basis. Concern for the victim is rising, but people remain in a quandary about responding to the offender. Alleged offenders who are patriarchal family members or church leaders who are popular, well-known, and undergirded by a support network are still likely to escape consequences and/or to have the incident covered up. Though family members bear little legal liability for failing to report abuse, church leaders need to realize that failing to report abuse could result in their incurring legal liability.

B. *Chaplaincy Ministries* (Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, director; Rev. Siebert Van Houten, Canadian director)

Chaplaincy Ministries is thankful for its expanding family, which now includes eighty-eight full-time and four part-time chaplains serving in hospitals, nursing homes, youth centers, prisons, hospice centers, counseling centers, military installations, veterans' medical centers, and in the workplace. Some CRC chaplains have moved into other ministries, and some have retired, but the Lord led nine others to join Chaplaincy Ministries. We gratefully report that our team of chaplains has grown, and they continue to serve with dedication, competence, and compassion around the world.

Staff members continue to work with prospective chaplains by reviewing their training, certification, and application for endorsement. They also offer pastoral support for chaplains and their families by providing newsletters, regional cluster gatherings, an annual conference, and periodic site visits. Through the generosity of the churches, Chaplaincy Ministries was able to provide some salary supplements and training stipends in cases of special need.

Even though three of our chaplains experienced the loss of their jobs because of corporate downsizing and institutional mergers, research continues to underscore the essential role of spiritual and religious issues in promoting wellness and health. We're grateful for the growing support of chaplaincy among leaders in health care, industry, hospice, and corrections.

1. Activities

– Staff is working with the calling churches of our chaplains to implement the plan for joint supervision of all chaplains, as approved by Synod 1998.
– We endorsed Rev. InSoon Gho as the first Christian Reformed woman military chaplain (United States Army).
– We gratefully acknowledge the support we were able to offer to several emerging community-based chaplaincy ministries.
– Our participation in the work of the major chaplaincy-certification organizations in the United States and Canada continues to be deeply appreciated.

2. Challenges to the ministry

– We're praying that younger persons with appropriate training and credentials will be led to serve as chaplains.
– We're exploring the support and possible endorsement of laypersons and volunteers for ministry in specialized settings.

- – Staff seeks to strengthen a mentoring program for new chaplains.
- – We're exploring ways to partner with other denominational agencies in order to increase our ministry effectiveness.

C. *Disability Concerns*

1. Accessibility of churches

Disability Concerns is responsible to synod for monitoring denominational progress in making all church buildings, services, and activities fully accessible to people with disabilities. The CRC *Yearbook* questionnaires, sent annually by the general secretary to all councils, have been adapted to provide this data. The results this year compared to past years are as follows:

	1996	1997	1998	1999
Barrier-free access	517	394	368	365
Partial accessibility	307	435	459	470
Signing for deaf	30	32	31	29
Aids for hearing impaired	428	455	190	185
Aids for visually impaired	210	245	240	244
Transportation	139	276	292	324

What do these figures indicate? The steady decline in the number of churches reporting barrier-free access has nearly stopped. That previous decline probably indicated greater care in reporting accurately rather than a steady increase in new barriers. The designation *barrier-free* on the questionnaire is an exacting standard, indicating, for example, that the church building is one with wheelchair access even to the pulpit area. The total number of churches completing the questionnaire is 835, and 365 of these indicate that they are barrier free according to this standard.

We have no way of verifying the answers given on the questionnaires, but the trends shown by these numbers should be reliable. That is, even if some answers are not accurate, the proportion of inaccurate answers should be fairly constant from year to year.

These figures also seem to indicate that the general CRC neglect of people with hearing impairments continues. The number of churches providing signing remains essentially flat, and those offering other aids has been declining, at least in the U.S. churches. Disability Concerns has decided that it will give this problem priority.

Special church programs for those with disability-related needs have been remaining constant. There is clear growth in providing aids for those with impaired vision, and the churches are also giving more attention to the transportation needs of their members and neighbors with disabilities.

The final question on the questionnaire asks about participation in church activities of people with disabilities. The data generated by the answers to this question are not shown in the CRC *Yearbook*, but they are very helpful to Disability Concerns in tracking denominational progress in bringing people with disabilities more fully into church life. This question was first included on the questionnaire in 1997, so we now have three years to track. The results are as follows:

Participation (members with disabilities serve in staff or volunteer positions in the congregation).

	1997	1998	1999
Paid staff	14	9	23
Officebearer	28	32	26
Church-school teacher	24	36	29
Usher/greeter	81	102	108
Committee member	57	78	94
Other	56	66	72

If we total these figures for each year, they show 260, 323, and 352, a slow gain. However, these numbers include individual members rather than churches. They are a minuscule part of the estimated 12 percent to 15 percent of the CRC membership (35,000 to 45,000) who have disabilities.

Many of those included in this overall estimate do not consider themselves to have disabilities, and many of those who do acknowledge their disabilities are not known to others as having disabilities. Thus there are many CRC members with disabilities who are actually active in church life and yet are not counted in our figures. Nevertheless, we have a long way to go.

It may also be interesting to note the following comparison of Canadian to U.S. figures:

	1998		1999	
	U. S.	Can.	U. S.	Can.
Barrier-free access	267	101	265	100
Partial accessibility	348	111	354	116
Signing for deaf	18	13	20	9
Aids for hearing impaired	134	56	94	92
Aids for visually impaired	237	109	251	113
Special programs	131	109	132	112
Transportation	218	74	237	87

Of U.S. churches, 619 completed the questionnaire this year; 216 Canadian churches returned their questionnaires. The total number of churches in the U.S., as counted by the Denominational Office, is 716; the Canadian total is 238. Though there is roughly one Canadian church for every three U.S. churches, the ratio shown by these figures indicates a stronger attention in all categories by Canadian churches to the needs of people with disabilities than the 1 to 3 ratio would project. Nearly as many Canadian churches rate themselves as fully accessible as rate themselves partially accessible, and Canadian churches are particularly strong in providing special programs and in offering aids for the hearing impaired.

2. Disability Concerns' program activities

Disability Concerns continues to carry on the programs listed on its sheet of resources and services, which it mails periodically to church councils. Some of Disability Concerns' programs this past year follow:

- Publishing *Breaking Barriers*, the newsletter carrying life stories of Christian Reformed people with disabilities. Circulation has been expanding as church contacts take responsibility for distributing copies to all the families in their churches.
- Providing articles on disabilities for *CRC Source*, *Classical Newsletter*, *Prayer Guide*, *The Banner*, etc.
- Supporting the volunteer regional disability consultants and their church-contact people that Disability Concerns has in place to bring help to individuals, families, and churches in the CRC. Exactly half of the classes now are served by a regional disability consultant.
- Establishing and maintaining regional committees to support the regional consultants; attending the meetings of these committees. Three such committees are now in various stages of development.
- Working with the regional consultants to plan and hold regional conferences. Three were held this year—in Ontario, Chicago, and California.
- Supporting, advising, and advocating for various people with disabilities and their families and helping churches and individuals locate any specialized disability services they required.

3. Disability challenges

The challenges Disability Concerns faces are as varied as the people with disabilities it seeks to represent. However, the challenges it regards as needing priority attention this year are the following:

- Locating, recruiting, and training additional competent and committed regional consultants in the classes which do not yet have them and encouraging them to identify the church-contact people who will link them to the congregations.
- Putting together a team to address the needs of people who are deaf or hard of hearing in order to bring them more fully into church life. The interagency strategic-planning team has finished its work, but the process of putting together the team to carry out the project is only beginning.
- Using the means at our disposal to double participation of people with disabilities in the leadership of their churches, councils, church-school staffs, committees, etc.
- Caring for the spiritual needs of people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses who live in community group homes, in particular those in the neighborhoods of CRCs. This challenge still faces the church and must be addressed from year to year.
- Seeking ways to impress the agencies and congregations of the CRCNA with their responsibility to help people with disabilities locate the monetary resources many of them, including many elderly, must have for such basic necessities as housing, medical services, and personal-care attendants and helping those who can work to locate jobs, develop the specific skills required, and receive the job coaching they may need to succeed.

D. Pastor-Church Relations

Pastor-Church Relations serves as a resource to pastors and congregations as they seek to serve Christ in their communities. There continue to be many

changes in how ministry is done, and there is increasing variety in churches throughout the denomination. The challenge is to remain focused on the gospel while allowing for unique ways of being the church.

1. Activities this year

Given the nature of Pastor-Church Relations, it is difficult to classify most of its activities into neat categories. Some tasks are consistent from year to year:

– Through the Ministerial Information Service, PCR maintains pastors' profiles and profiles of vacant congregations. It assists in matching interested pastors with churches. During this past year it processed approximately 2,250 profiles.
– Regional pastors are present in each classis. There are currently sixty-three pastors serving in the forty-seven classes.
– Mentors are assigned to each new candidate or pastor entering the CRC ministry.
– Through the work of Beth Kuiper as program planner, PCR attempts to respond to the needs of unordained staff and the churches they serve.
– Clarification of the role of the regional pastor was accomplished through a revised manual for regional pastors.

Many more activities are responses to crises and consultation regarding particular needs:

– Conflict mediation within congregations is a time-consuming and demanding task. There are a number of calls from church councils to assist in mediation.
– There are many requests for input on procedures for staff evaluation, multistaff challenges, illness, pastors' direction in ministry, etc.
– The staff takes part in seminars for pastors and spouses and in more general training for church members.
– Synod 1998 adopted guidelines for separation and support of pastors and congregations.

2. Challenges to the ministry

– Increasing training opportunities for mentors of new pastors.
– Continuing to coordinate the work of PCR and Calvin Theological Seminary to encourage the continuum of training and support of clergy.
– Planning for a coordinated presentation of continuing education for clergy and staff ministries in the CRCNA.
– Continuing to work with Calvin Seminary in improving placement for women and ethnic graduates.
– Encouraging specialized interim ministry in the CRCNA.
– Assisting in establishing evaluation procedures for clergy and councils which will help develop and support ministry in a preventive way.

E. Race Relations (director's position, vacant—Grand Rapids; Mrs. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley, regional director—Chicago; Rev. Norberto Wolf, regional director—Los Angeles)

The mandate of Race Relations is "to design, organize, and implement programs which the denomination, churches, and members can effectively use

to eliminate racism, both the causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world."

Race Relations uses four strategies to dismantle racism, promote reconciliation, and celebrate diversity: (1) raising awareness of personal, cultural, and institutional prejudice and racism through the use of educational resources; (2) leadership development by offering scholarships and mentoring relationships; (3) providing consultation and/or intervention when requested by a church or classis; and (4) advocating on behalf of ethnic-minority members of the CRCNA.

A significant part of the work of Race Relations has to do with organizing and facilitating spiritual and educational opportunities to worship, fellowship, and dialogue together. The purposes of these joint ventures are (1) to strongly encourage our church and classis leaders to take the leadership role in making racial reconciliation and racial justice a reality in the CRCNA and to stimulate honest discussion in our churches and Christian schools concerning the importance of racial reconciliation (one of the main instruments staff members use in their efforts is the document entitled *God's Diverse and Unified Family*, passed by Synod 1996 and published by CRC Publications); (2) to promote and encourage honest discussion among our diverse churches about the issues of racial reconciliation, racial prejudice, ethnic diversity, and obedience to God's Word; and (3) to facilitate and encourage reconciliation among the churches and individual members.

1. Activities of the central Race Relations office in the past year

    – Facilitation and promotion of participation in the denominational workshops on dismantling racism held with the help of Crossroads Ministry.
    – Distribution of the booklet *God's Diverse and Unified Family* among the churches in order to promote the knowledge and acceptance of the biblical guidelines and calling of Synod 1996.
    – Designation of All Nations Heritage Week and distribution of the promotional materials.
    – Supervision of the completion of the video *Diversity—Celebrate God's Wonderful Gift.*
    – Facilitation of workshops for the Institute for the Healing of Racism.
    – Encouraging students with Race Relations scholarships to participate in the programs offered by their schools to promote diversity.
    – Participation in the planning and execution of the Multiethnic Conference, held in Grand Rapids in conjunction with synod.
    – Visiting the regional directors.
    – Participation as board member, committee member, or adviser in the following bodies: National Indian Ministries Board (Canada), Canadian Council Race Reconciliation Committee, Reformed Ecumenical Council, National Association of Evangelicals Social Action Committee, African-American Planning Committee, Home Missions' intercultural directors' planning meetings, Ecumenical Task Force on Racism, and the Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education Board.

2. Activities of the regional directors in the past year

- Participation in scheduled classes meetings and in classical committee meetings held in the regions the staff members serve.
- Consultation with pastors, church leaders, and Christian-school leaders concerning issues of prejudice, discrimination, racism, and ways to educate and celebrate our diversity.
- Distribution of the booklet containing the diversity report of Synod 1996 among pastors and councils and encouraging them to study how to teach and apply its lessons in their congregations.
- Leading training seminars and workshop on cultural diversity and sensitivity, facility sharing, racism, racial reconciliation, and racial justice.
- Organizing worship services celebrating Christian unity and diversity.
- Mentoring multiethnic leaders interested in ministering in our denomination.
- Teaching courses in evangelist-training programs.
- Facilitating interactions between ethnic-minority and majority church leaders and congregations.
- Organizing a racial-reconciliation camp for middle-school-age youth from five different ethnic groups.

3. Leadership development

Race Relations reports that the following Race Relations scholarships were awarded for a total amount of $23,800.

Recipient	African American	Asian	Native Hispanic	American	Other
Calvin College	0	2	1	0	1
Calvin Seminary	0	1	2	0	1
Dordt College	1	0	1	0	1
Reformed Bible College	0	0	1	1	1
Trinity Chr. College	0	3	0	1	0

The following ministries have received Race Relations' grants for a total amount of $14,375:

Friendship Community Church — Weston, Ontario
Grace and Peace Fellowship CRC — Chicago, Illinois
His Place — Grand Rapids, Michigan
Immanuel CRC — Kalamazoo, Michigan
Lao CRC — Holland, Michigan
Vietnamese Reformed Christian Church — Kentwood, Michigan

4. Challenges

a. The Race Relations division needs to motivate more classes to study Synod 1996's diversity report and its implications for the denomination, the classes, and individual congregations. Only fourteen classes have done so since 1996. The synodical vision of a "united and diverse"

church presents challenges that most classes find difficult to tackle. Also, the "urgent" matters that come before classes make it difficult for many of them to insert this important and sometimes uncomfortable issue into their agendas.

b. As a result of the denominational workshops on dismantling institutional racism, the Ministries Coordinating Council has joined with Crossroads Ministry in setting up a long-range plan against racism. Race Relations now faces the challenge of being MCC's most vigorous and persevering ally in this commitment, because there will be opposition to many of the steps to be taken.

c. The Pastoral Ministries Board will be diligent in its search for a God-gifted person to become the new director of the Race Relations division. The need is urgent, and the task challenging and exciting, but delays will be damaging.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, interim executive director; and the other Pastoral Ministries directors when Pastoral Ministries matters are discussed.

B. That synod encourage churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 27 to October 3, 1999, and September 25 to October 1, 2000.

Grounds:
1. The task of eliminating racism is formidable; it is a matter that needs to be put boldly before the congregations at all times but especially as they celebrate Worldwide Communion in October.
2. The financial support that is received when congregations celebrate All Nations Heritage Week dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award grants and scholarships for ethnic-minority leadership and ministry.

C. That synod approve the report (Appendix A) and its recommendations concerning the development and deployment of interim-ministry specialists.

> Pastoral Ministries
> Peter Borgdorff, interim executive director

Appendix
Proposal for Developing a Group of Trained Interim-Ministry Specialists in the Christian Reformed Church in North America

I. Background

In 1998 the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) approved a change in Church Order Article 17. Article 17-a now reads:

> Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from active ministerial service in a congregation

through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

While the above change in Article 17 brought clearer definition to the processes by which a nondisciplinary separation between a congregation and its pastor may take place, synod did not stop there. It went on to make significant additions to the supplement to Article 17 which describe how this article is to be applied in the life of the church. One provision adopted is Church Order Supplement, Article 17-b:

> If a classis has reason to believe that before a congregation calls another pastor it needs a time of healing and preparing itself for an effective relationship with a new minister, it shall instruct the classical church counselor not to sign a letter of call until the classis and the church council decide that this process is complete (cf. Church Order Art. 9).

Pastoral ministries now proposes that synod approve establishing a channel through which congregations needing help in the process referred to in Church Order Supplement, Article 17-b can receive it. One of the most direct ways of carrying out that process is by obtaining the interim services of a pastor who is a trained interim-ministry specialist. Such a pastor is specially trained to lead congregations through difficult times of transition, such as those following a conflicted pastorate resulting in a pastor's resignation, a long pastorate (over ten years), a pastorate which leaves the congregation divided, or a situation where a congregation has a strong need to reevaluate its mission and set new directions.

Trained interim-ministry specialists could provide other benefits besides mediation in conflict situations. A pastoral vacancy brings to a church not only a loss of the services of the pastor but also an opportunity. It can be an opportunity for freshly and creatively addressing the direction of a church. The evaluation and planning such an analysis involves can often be carried out more freely during a pastoral vacancy than during the tenure of a pastor because during a vacancy the congregation is not tied to the gifts of a specific person. Trained interim-ministry specialists are equipped to help congregations claim the positive opportunities of a pastoral vacancy and to prepare for an effective relationship with a new pastor.

Training and certifying specialists in interim ministry is not a new ecclesiastical practice. Various Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Methodist denominations have trained such specialists for decades, using them in ways adjusted to fit a particular denomination's structures. The majority of vacant congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) do not call another pastor until they have been served by an interim minister. Strict training and certification are required in some denominations. That interim ministry has become a recognized specialty in ministry is apparent from the fact that there is an organization called Interim Ministry Network, Inc., which runs training programs and certifies pastors for this specialty.

The term *interim ministry* has been used in the CRCNA for a number of years with a meaning somewhat different from what the term means in most denominations. Among us it has been applied to the pastors—usually retired—who have served congregations for brief periods of vacancy, often six weeks to three months, bringing valuable ministry maintenance in preaching, pastoral care, and some teaching. In the CRC the term formerly used was *stated*

supply, and in many denominations that is still the term used. Though that kind of ministry is rightfully appreciated, it typically does not address the objectives which interim-ministry specialists are trained to address. A few retired pastors with good instincts and rich pastoral experience make significant attempts without special training. Even they could no doubt make a much bigger difference if they had the benefit of good training. However, it is unrealistic for any pastor, however well-trained, to achieve the objectives of trained interim ministry in six weeks or three months.

In the Christian Reformed Church there is some history of trained interim-ministry specialists. In the years 1980-1995, Christian Reformed Home Missions trained and supported four clergy couples for ministry to churches in transition. These pastors served congregations for periods of about six months to one year, carrying on normal ministry tasks but also dealing intentionally with the special dynamics of churches in transition. Also, Classis Central California has a full-time interim minister to serve vacant churches in that region.

II. The need

A survey of the current life of the CRCNA makes it clear that there is a need for the specialized leadership of interim pastors. There are increasing numbers of involuntary resignations of pastors and separations between pastors and congregations because of tensions that have developed. Many churches have had several difficulties and separations from pastors. Other congregations have had conflict and division about other issues and are experiencing confusion about future directions of their ministry. Still other congregations are intentional about taking the opportunity to evaluate their ministries in a changing situation. For these congregations the presence of a trained pastor to assist in evaluating what has transpired in the past and to plan for the future could lead to a positive change. The usefulness of interim-ministry specialists can be seen in the experience of the Reformed Church in America, which has had ministers with this specialty in recent years:

> Experience shows that when a specialized interim minister has been employed in [a time of transition], the congregation involved is much more likely to enter upon a productive and positive ministry. Evidence shows that where a specialized interim minister was recommended and not used, the next pastorate tends to be short and conflicted.
>
> (Specialized Interim-Ministry Guidelines, Aug. 1995, p. 3)

III. Proposal

Pastoral Ministries proposes that the CRCNA initiate a program of trained interim-ministry specialists. This program will involve pastors who have received specialized training in an accredited program such as the Interim Ministry Network, Inc. and have been endorsed by Pastoral Ministries. This program will be administered by the Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) division of Pastoral Ministries.

Specifics for such a program follow:

A. Administration

1. Denominational administration will facilitate accountability and stability in the interim-ministry program. The accountability will involve

reporting/evaluation by both Pastoral Ministries and the congregation being served, as well as intentional interaction with fellow interim pastors. There will also be opportunity for some interaction with the classis in which an interim pastor serves.

2. Accountability will be maintained both by personal contact with the director of Pastor-Church Relations and by a process for supervision yet to be developed.

3. Salary, benefits, and expenses will be determined by Pastoral Ministries.

4. Pastoral Ministries will supervise this program by means of a committee selected by the Pastoral Ministries Board.

B. Endorsement

1. The Pastoral Ministries Board committee or other designated persons will be responsible to assist the director of Pastor-Church Relations in screening possible candidates for endorsement in interim ministry.

2. Criteria for candidates

   a. Ordination in the CRCNA and parish experience.
   b. Ability to use a variety of processes to deal with congregational issues.
   c. Ability to set appropriate boundaries in conflict situations.
   d. Understanding of organizational development and systems theory.
   e. Training through an accredited program such as those sponsored by the Interim Ministry Network, Inc.

C. Financial considerations

Since the program will be under the administrative direction of Pastoral Ministries and is to benefit the denomination, there will need to be a denominational fund to help defray expenses.

1. Salary will be set according to denominational compensation standards. Most of the expenses will be carried by the churches using this service. It is assumed that any Fund for Smaller Churches assistance to a congregation will remain the same for an interim-ministry specialist as for a called pastor.

2. In certain circumstances retired pastors will be asked to serve for shorter interims (approximately three months).

3. Benefits such as insurance and pension will be guaranteed—paid either by the congregation served or by the denominational fund.

4. Specific costs (for up to six pastors):

Salaries, benefits, expenses:	$390,000
Training:	$ 5,000
Total:	$395,000

   Revenue: Congregations served will be asked to pay the equivalent of what they would pay a pastor in salary, benefits, and expenses.

   A $2.00 ministry-share assessment (approximately $210,000) will provide for the other costs.

Grounds:
a. The use of interim-ministry specialists is an effective way to assist congregations that are in transition. There is a history of such helpful intervention in the CRCNA and other denominations.
b. Many congregations require assistance when there has been a termination of the pastor's service or when the congregation is evaluating new directions for ministry during a vacancy.
c. Historically the Christian Reformed denomination has taken responsibility for adequate support and supervision of its pastors. In the case of interim-ministry specialists, this will be a collaborative effort between the congregation and the denomination.

Pastoral Ministries
Peter Borgdorff, interim director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church maintains employee-benefit programs that provide retirement benefits as well as health, life, and disability insurance for employees of denominational agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

Administration of these programs is handled jointly by the denomination's Office of Personnel and Office of Finance and Administration. The responsibilities of the Office of Personnel include communication, enrollment, and record keeping; the Office of Finance and Administration handles financial administration, accounting, control, and investment management.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirements plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet two to four times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed to address matters unique to the responsibilities of the U.S. or Canadian trustees.

The responsibilities of the boards include long-term planning, benefit-related decision making, and policy definition as well as oversight of fund assets and investment returns. The U.S. board monitors the investment activities of the funds through a subcommittee made up of trustees and additional members recruited for their special expertise in investment-related matters. The Canadian board provides investment oversight within the context of the full committee.

During 1995 the role of the U.S. board was expanded to include governance of the U.S. Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) program. The Canadian CGI plan is administratively managed by staff under the governance of the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Ontario Corporation.

The U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance is a five-member board currently chaired by Mr. William Venema. The Canadian Pension Trustees are a board of five members chaired by Mr. John Woudstra.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' pension funds

The ministers' pension funds are defined-benefit pension plans designed to provide retirement income and disability benefits to ordained ministers within the Christian Reformed Church. As of December 31, 1998, there were 1,763 participants in the ministers' pension plans, categorized as follows:

	U.S.	Canada	Total
Active ministers	801	224	1,025
Retired ministers	372	121	493
Spouses and dependents	120	44	164
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	62	19	81
Total	1,355	408	1,763

Ordinarily, every three years independent actuaries are employed to do a complete valuation of the liabilities and assets of the plans. A valuation was

made in January 1996, and, because an actuarial valuation was needed in connection with a study of certain proposed changes in the design of the plans, another valuation was performed in December 1998.

1. Basic assumptions

    The calculation of the funded position of the plans, including the actuarial accrued liability, is based on several major assumptions. These assumptions are reviewed and approved regularly by the U.S. and Canadian trustees and are based on historical data and expectations for future trends. Most significant of these assumptions include those regarding investment yields. An interest rate is assumed at 7.5 percent for the Canadian plan and 8.0 percent for the U.S. plan.

    The proposed formula for pension determination is 1.1 percent of the final average salary multiplied by the retiree's years of credited service for service through December 31, 1999, and 1.46 percent of the final average salary multiplied by the retiree's years of credited service for service after December 31, 1999. Therefore, expectations concerning increases in ministers' salaries enter very significantly into the calculation of the position of the plans. The 1999 average salary used for pension determination was $33,312 (U.S.) and $35,547 (Canada).

2. Asset balances

    Market values of fund assets were as follows:

	December 31, 1998	December 31, 1997
United States (U.S. $)	$92,168,000	$83,175,000
Canada (Can. $)	$22,588,000	$21,407,000

    Both the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees are guided in their investment decisions by the denomination's investment policies and by policies concerning the allocation of assets between equities and fixed-income instruments. The primary goal is to provide an above-average return and at the same time to preserve principal. Five professional money managers direct the day-to-day investments of the pension funds. In the United States this service is performed by Ambs Investment Counsel, Inc.; Invesco; Loomis, Sayles and Co., L.P.; and NBD Bank, Trust Division. Canadian pension-fund investments are managed by Perigee Investment Counsel Inc.

3. Investment results

    Investment returns are continually monitored by the investment committees of both the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees. Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	1998	3 years	5 years
Canadian Plan	7.2%	15.2%	12.4%
U.S. Plan	13.1%	16.6%	14.5%

    As these statistics indicate, the investment performance of the plans has been very strong. The trustees are grateful for this performance, mindful as

they are of the long-term nature of the plan's obligation to pay retirement and other benefits to its participants and aware of the need to participate in and benefit from "up" markets.

4. Plan review

In April 1997 the Canadian Pension Trustees and the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance, meeting in joint session, authorized a complete review of the design of the ministers' pension plans (the "plans") to determine whether the plans continue to meet the needs of the participants within existing and anticipated financial resources and constraints.

The task of performing the review was assigned to a three-person Pension Design Committee including Mr. Ary deJong, a member of the Canadian board; Mr. William Venema, a member of the U.S. board; and Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, administrator of the plans, with the understanding that all aspects of the plans would be reviewed. "All aspects" were to include the retirement provisions of the plans, disability coverage, and other benefit provisions.

This committee engaged in a process of research and dialogue which included a review of plan documents, financial statements, actuarial reports, and related materials. In addition, the committee performed a survey of a significant portion of the plans' participants in both the U.S. and Canada to obtain information useful to an understanding of the needs and perspectives of all participants. Also, information was requested from other denominations and from such other sources as seemed promising. Interim reports of the work of the committee were given to the joint meetings of the trustees, and their advice and perspectives contributed to the process of formulating final recommendations.

A complete actuarial evaluation of each plan was performed to determine the cost of proposed changes and the required level of funding. Based on these evaluations, the trustees concluded that the proposed changes are feasible.

In consideration of all the foregoing and against the background of all of the committee's discussions, consultations, and research, the following recommendations are offered:

a. That synod receive as information the action of the pension trustees which established the target for a combination of governmental benefits and the amount provided by the plans as "full benefit" for a "normal career" to be approximately 70 percent of the sum of the final average salary and the average housing allowance applicable in the year of retirement.

Grounds:
1) This level of income replacement is judged by the actuaries and others knowledgeable in the field as the level needed to sustain a reasonable level of postretirement needs.
2) The recommended percentage is consistent with the norms generally accepted by professional advisers practicing in the area of retirement planning.

b. That synod receive as information the action of the pension trustees which defined a "normal career" (the period of service needed to earn

the right to a "full benefit") as approximately thirty-seven years of service in the ministry.

Grounds:
1) The plans are, first and foremost, devices to provide an adequate level of postretirement income to those having served a full career in service to the church.
2) Qualified persons frequently are attracted to the ministry after having some experience in other careers and, as such, enter the ministry later in life than generally has been the case in the past.
3) Those entering the ministry after service in other careers may or may not have had an opportunity to build any significant retirement assets and must look to their years in the ministry for this purpose.

c. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards to change the multiple used in the formula to determine pension benefits to 1.46 percent from 1.1 percent; that this change be given effect for service after December 31, 1999; and that pension benefits for ministers whose careers include the date January 1, 2000, be determined by applying 1.1 percent for all pensionable service through December 31, 1999, and 1.46 percent for all pensionable service after that date.

Grounds:
1) This change in the multiple used to calculate pension benefits is needed to achieve the 70 percent income-replacement target.
2) The phasing in of this change, achieved by adopting a January 1, 2000, date of conversion, will allow its effect to be spread over a period of years and will remove any incentive to artificially "manage" retirement dates.

d. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards to change the amount of the survivors' benefit paid to the spouses of participants, whether these participants die before or after the date of retirement, to 66⅔ percent from 80 percent.
Further, that synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards that this change be made effective January 1, 2000, with proration in the case of deceased participants whose careers span this date, and that such proration be determined on the basis of the period of active participation in the plan before and after January 1, 2000.

Grounds:
1) Canadian regulations presently require survivor benefits paid by the Canadian plan to conform to this recommendation. Administration of provisions of the Canadian plan which are at variance with this requirement present ongoing challenges.
2) Survivor-benefit amounts equal to 66⅔ percent of the deceased participant's benefits appear to be in line with what is commonly found in similar retirement plans.

e. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards to discontinue the allowance currently provided by the plan for dependent children of persons experiencing total and permanent disability while in active service, effective for disabilities after December 31, 1999, and

applicable to the participants' entire benefit for all years of service before and after that date.

Grounds:
1) The current dependent-allowance provision exceeds the amount allowed in Canada by pension regulators and presents an ongoing problem in the administration of that plan.
2) The Special Assistance Fund is available to provide assistance in cases of special need.

f. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards that the U.S. plan pay to the estate of an unmarried participant who dies while in the active ministry an amount representing the computed value of the deceased minister's interest in the plan.

Further, that synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards that this change become effective January 1, 2000, and be applicable to the participant's entire benefit for all service before and after that date.

Grounds:
1) This provision has been included in the Canadian plan as required by regulation.
2) While married persons benefit from the survivor-benefit provisions of the plan, unmarried participants do not. This provision will more closely align the survivor benefits of married and unmarried participants.

g. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards to change the reduction in benefits associated with early retirement (beginning at age 55 and continuing through age 64) to .3 percent from .6 percent for each month by which the date of early retirement precedes age 65 and that this change be effective for all retirements on or after January 1, 2000, for all years of plan participation.

Grounds:
1) The current deep discount associated with early retirement is viewed by many plan participants as excessive and is out of step with practices generally followed by similar plans.
2) This easing of the penalty associated with early retirement should not change the behaviors of those who continue to feel a call to serve the church. Those who, for whatever reason, do not feel so called are well served by provisions making early retirement possible.

h. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards to increase benefits paid to retired participants by a factor of 2 percent of retirement benefits for each year (pro rata for a portion of a year) of retirement since the date of the most recent such adjustment (July 1, 1992) and through December 31, 1998.

Further, that synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards that such adjustment be made effective January 1, 1999, with appropriate lump-sum payment made for any period between January 1, 1999, and the date this recommendation is implemented.

Grounds:
1) While the plan does not contain any provision for "indexing" of benefits, retired participants do experience increases in the cost of essential living expenses and are in need of some adjustment to retirement income to offset these increased expenses.
2) We have been advised by the plans' actuaries that 2 percent is approximately equal to the increase in cost of living in the U.S. and Canada during this period.
3) Calculating the adjustment based on the number of years of retirement since the date of the most recent such adjustment will provide the greatest increase to those who have gone the longest without any adjustment and very little, if any, increase to those whose retirement is very recent.

i. That synod approve the recommendation of the pension boards that the provisions of the plans require the trustees, at least every three years, to consider whether any adjustment should be made to the benefits paid to retired participants for the effects of changes in living costs or in consideration of such other factors as the trustees may believe appropriate in the circumstances.

Ground: The plan should contain some provision to regularize consideration of the effects of changes in the living costs of retired participants and the financial ability of the plan to provide some relief.

j. That synod authorize the trustees to undertake a general rewriting of the plans to incorporate all substantive changes and all "housekeeping" and "compliance" changes previously made and not yet incorporated in the language of the plan documents, to clarify ambiguities, and to make the two plans conform to each other as much as possible.

Grounds:
1) Certain changes to the plans approved by prior synods, although properly considered in the day-to-day administration of the plans, are not adequately reflected in the language of the plan documents.
2) In the view of the professionals serving the plans, the language and construction of the plans should be improved in the interest of greater clarity and administrative efficiency.
3) Seemingly unintended differences between the U.S. and Canadian plans complicate the administration of the plans and frustrate the desire to have these plans, to the extent possible, "mirror" each other.

At the request of the pension trustees, the Pension Design Committee is continuing its study of defined-contribution options. The trustees hope that any recommendations resulting from this study will be available in sufficient time for consideration by the trustees in advance of Synod 2000.

5. Funding strategy
   Since the start of the present ministers' pension plans in 1970, they have been funded by a combination of ministry shares and direct billings. Ministry shares have paid for the pension benefits of ministers serving churches (one pastor in cases of churches having multiple-staff ministries).

The underlying concept has been that ministers serve several congregations during the course of their careers and in so doing serve the entire CRC. The cost of pension benefits for these ministers has been spread among all the members of the CRC. Regardless of whether one attends a large church or a small church, the pension cost to be paid by each member is the same.

Since 1970 each ministry which employs a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any capacity other than first or only pastor has paid an annual assessment for the future pension to be paid to such ministers. Approximately one-third of all ministers covered by the plans are on the assessment basis. The assessment is paid quarterly to the ministers' pension funds.

Synod 1997 approved a new method of funding the pension costs of all first/only pastors and chaplains. Under this new method, pension costs associated with these pastors are funded by means of an assessment on each professing member of the denomination age 18 or older. The amount of the assessment for 1998 and 1999 is $16.00 per member. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each church, based on each church's reported membership statistics. As with ministry shares, this funding method spreads the cost evenly among all members of the CRC.

B. *Employees' retirement plans*

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plan on a quarterly basis by participating groups in an amount equal to 9 percent of the compensation of the unordained employees who are participants in the plan. Twice each year participants receive a statement indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the total value of their accounts, and the vested percentage in their accounts.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among a number of investment alternatives, such as a money-market fund, a bond fund, a pooled-equity fund, and a guaranteed-investment contract fund. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by the NBD Bank, N.A. Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Mutual Life Assurance Company of Canada.

C. *Consolidated Group Insurance*

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan which offers life, health, and dental coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies. Currently there are 1,384 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 727 pastors and employees of local churches, 317 employees of denominational agencies, and 288 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan purchased through a major health-insurance provider. The coverage in Canada is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the U.S. a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. Premium assessments are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses.

In the U.S. the plan has been significantly affected by increasing costs of health care and changes in systems available to self-insured plans for the

administration of claims and for obtaining discounts through provider networks.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the United States Board of Pensions and Insurance or to Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus when insurance matters and matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 1998 and 1999 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod receive as information items a and b of Section III, A, 4 of this report and approve the recommendations concerning changes in the design of the plans and concerning a general rewriting of plan documents as set forth in items c through j of Section III, A, 4.

D. That synod elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance from the following nominations for three-year terms beginning July 1, 1999.

1. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

   a. *Mr. Stan Vander Roest* is a vice president and the chief financial officer for U.S. operations of Gerber Products Company. He is a member of Trinity CRC in Sparta and presently serves as its treasurer. Mr. Vander Roest is a C.P.A. and currently serves as a trustee and the treasurer for the Gerber Foundation.

   b. *Mr. George Vande Werken* is senior vice president of Sand Ridge Bank in northwest Indiana. He is a member of Second CRC in Highland, where he has served terms as elder and deacon. Mr. Vande Werken has also served as a secretary of The Back to God Hour Board, a member of the board of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services in Grand Rapids, and a member of the board of Highland Christian School.

2. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

   a. *Dr. Arthur Schoonveld* is the senior pastor of Ivanrest CRC in Grandville, Michigan. He has served on the CRCNA Board of Trustees for six years, two years as the president. Dr. Schoonveld has also served on the Board of Trustees of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois.

   b. *Rev. Edward Tamminga* is the senior pastor of Second CRC in Grand Haven, Michigan. He has served on the Pastoral Ministries Board, the Christian Reformed Home Missions Board, and The Back to God Hour Board. Rev. Tamminga has also served a number of times as a delegate to synod.

E. That synod elect two members to the Canadian Pension Trustees for terms beginning July 1, 1999.

1. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

   a. *Mr. John Luimes*, of North York, Ontario, is a chief actuary with Trans America Life of Canada. He is a member of Willowdale CRC in Toronto and is serving there as an elder. Mr. Luimes has also served as a Cadet counselor and as treasurer for Willowdale Christian Schools.

   b. *Mr. Henry Stuive*, of Beamsville, Ontario, is an actuary with Westbury Life Insurance. He is a member of Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, where he is serving as a deacon and is involved in the Sunday-school program. Mr. Stuive has served as a Cadet counselor, as a school-board member, and on various school committees.

2. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

   a. *Mr. Bruce Dykstra*, of Ancaster, Ontario, is finance and development director for Hamilton Christian High School. He is a member of Ancaster CRC and is serving there as an elder. Mr. Dykstra worked for thirty-four years for the Royal Bank of Canada. He is a delegate to Synod1999.

   b. *Mr. Sam Van Randen*, of Delta, British Columbia, is a C.G.A. and recently retired as controller for a wholesale bakery-supplies firm. He is a member of First CRC in New Westminster and is presently church treasurer. Mr. Van Randen also serves as chairman of elders and vice president of council.

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Pensions and Insurance
Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance
and administration

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I. Introduction

This report gives an overview of youth ministry in the denomination in 1998 and provides a sampling of how the Youth-Ministry Committee (YMC) is supporting, encouraging, and improving the way the denomination ministers to youth. A major part of our work is to embrace, affirm, and monitor the work of the three ministry divisions of Dynamic Youth Ministries (formerly known as United Calvinist Youth). The committee as a whole has met twice since its report to Synod 1998.

II. Name change for United Calvinist Youth

At its October 1998 meeting the board of directors of United Calvinist Youth announced to the YMC that the board had voted to adopt a new name for its ministries, Dynamic Youth Ministries: Bringing Children and Youth into a Dynamic Relationship with Jesus Christ. The board believes that the new name is more descriptive of its ministries, is biblically and theologically sound, and will also help in marketing its services to churches.

III. Promoting the work of Dynamic Youth Ministries

For many years the CRC has endorsed the work of Dynamic Youth Ministries as the denominationally related youth-ministry source. Still, a significant number of CRC congregations do not use all the divisions of Dynamic Youth Ministries. The YMC believes that the churches could benefit from participation in Dynamic Youth Ministries' programs and resources. A special task force of YMC has surveyed over two hundred churches that do not presently use all three of the ministries of Dynamic Youth Ministries (GEMS, Cadets, and Youth Unlimited). This survey found a very high level of satisfaction with the work of these ministries and has encouraged us to recommend them to those churches that do not participate.

IV. Mentoring program

Encouraged by the response to the relational youth-ministry model, YMC has begun work on exploring the importance of mentoring as a means of ministry to young people. A subcommittee is meeting to examine this type of ministry. It is our hope that this committee will produce materials that the church can find useful in implementing mentoring ministries in local congregations.

V. Nominations for Youth-Ministry Committee

Several committee positions need to be filled. Since Synod 1998 gave permission for committees to present a single nominee (an incumbent) for a second term, we would like to present the following names as single nominees:

A. Mid-West United States
Ms. Mary De Groot has been involved in local-church youth ministry for over twenty years. She has served on the Hawkeye League board and has been a regional training coordinator for UCY. She attends Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa.

B. Cadets
   Mr. Gerry Bysma is a member of Clarkson CRC in Mississauga, Ontario. He has served for thirty years as a Cadet counselor and six years as president of the Cadet Corps. He also is a past president of United Calvinist Youth.

C. Member-at-large
   Ms. Glenda Tamming is presently youth director at Baldwin CRC, Jenison, Michigan.

   For three positions in which the incumbents are presently completing their second terms, the committee is pleased to present the following pairs of nominees.

D. Youth Unlimited
   Mr. Scott Bouwman is a member of Calvary CRC in Holland, Michigan. He has been involved in youth ministry since 1981, both in junior and senior high ministry. Presently he is a member of the Youth Unlimited Board and is involved in Youth Unlimited service projects and the annual summer convention.
   Ms. Dawn Ryswyk lives in Edgerton, Minnesota. She has been in youth ministry for ten years as a local-church youth leader and as chair of the Minn-i-kota League. She has also been a Youth Unlimited Board member for eight years, a regional representative, a league trainer, a SERVE projects coordinator, and a regular participant in the annual conventions.

E. Central United States
   Rev. Marvin Vander Vliet is pastor of First CRC in Jenison, Michigan. He has been involved with the Cadet Corps since 1971. He served as Cadet Corps chaplain for seven years and is presently chaplain of the Rush Creek Cadet Council.
   Ms. Nancy Knol is a graduate of Calvin College with a degree in secondary education. She has taught middle school and high school for over twenty years and currently teaches at Grand Rapids Christian High School. She has been a leader in Children and Worship training sessions. She is a member of Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

F. Western Canada
   Rev. Herbert de Ruyter is pastor of First CRC in Chilliwack, British Columbia. He has over twenty-one years of youth-ministry experience and is a regional trainer for Youth Unlimited in British Columbia.
   Ms. Toni Fernhout is principal of Edmonton Christian School-Northeast Campus. She is a member of Trinity CRC in Edmonton, where she has served as a youth leader for many years. She has served as secretary-treasurer of the Youth-Ministry Committee of Classis Alberta since its inception.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Dr. Robert Keeley, and the secretary, Ms. Glenda Tamming.

B. That synod approve the single nominees for Mid-West United States representative, for Cadets representative, and for member-at-large representative for three-year terms on the YMC.

C. That synod select one of the nominees for Western Canada representative, one for Youth Unlimited representative, and one for Central United States representative to three-year terms on the YMC.

D. That the three divisions of Dynamic Youth Ministries—Cadets, GEMS, and Youth Unlimited—be placed on the recommended-causes list.

<div align="right">

Youth-Ministry Committee
Robert Keeley, chairperson
Glenda Tamming, secretary

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Dynamic Youth Ministries: GEMS Girls' Clubs

What a year this has been for the ministry of GEMS Girls' Clubs! We continue to receive God's blessing on our important work with girls. This year saw a growth in the number of clubs. We now serve 738 clubs in the United States, Canada, Dominican Republic, and Romania. Most clubs report a growth in size, so we are now serving a record number of girls.

Counselors have taken advantage of the excellent training opportunities that are offered: 2,257 women participated in local workshops, regional conferences, and/or the annual convention. This statistic reveals the great commitment that our counselors make. They are willing not only to work with the girls week in and week out but also to develop and increase their leadership skills.

The twenty-ninth annual Counselors' Convention was held in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with over 825 women participating in this dynamic and often life-changing three-day event. At convention, counselors received training in their own area of personal ministry and were introduced to this year's theme, "Lord, I Am Your Masterpiece!" Studying this theme about our value and worth to God has brought great encouragement to both girls and counselors.

Celebration Gatherings continue to be held across the continent. These events range in size from five hundred to two thousand girls, counselors, and guests. The morning is devoted to celebrating God's goodness through exciting praise and worship, creative movement, mime, and drama. These big events have helped the girls feel part of a larger ministry. They get excited about friendships with girls from other churches.

One additional area of praise is for the establishment of the first-ever international summer camp for GEMS, scheduled to be held in August 1999. This past year has been devoted to the organization of the camp. GET CONNECTED! CAMP will be open to early teen girls—those completing their sixth, seventh, or eighth grade of school by summer. This age group was chosen because of the risk that they face of being lost to the culture of today. Those who minister through GEMS desire to do all they can to help girls get on the right path and stay on it. This week-long camp will be held on the shores of Lake Tippicanoe in northern Indiana.

God is good!

<div align="right">

GEMS Girls' Clubs
Jan Boone, executive director

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Dynamic Youth Ministries: Calvinist Cadet Corps

Leadership training continues to be the hot issue in the Cadet Corps this year. There is a renewed impetus to remind Cadet counselors of the importance of their calling and to empower them to do their job more effectively. That came to the forefront as the seven regional training coordinators met at Calvin College in January and made plans to hold regional training conferences throughout North America next fall, another new step for the Cadet Corps. Last year the Corps's international training was held at the Haworth Center on the campus of Hope College, Holland, Michigan. The theme "Let Your Light Shine" served as a kickoff for the season and carries through until the summer of 1999.

Cadeting's largest event, the international camporee, is scheduled to take place August 4-11, 1999, and is expected to draw well over a thousand men and boys to western Illinois to eat, sleep, and live in groups of ten in a wilderness setting for a week. It's an opportunity to grow close to other men and boys, to nature, and best of all to God. The planners pray hard and work hard to help boys grow more Christ-like through the week. And that's what Cadeting is all about.

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Calvinist Cadet Corps
G. Richard Broene, executive director

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Dynamic Youth Ministries: Youth Unlimited

I. Compass 21—Coming soon

A brand-new service will soon be available to local churches that want to increase the effectiveness of their youth ministry. The program, called Compass 21, is based upon seven shared biblical values and includes the CRC's "Walk with Me" model. The training is not designed to offer the churches another program. There are plenty of excellent youth-ministry resources already available on the market. What churches need is to understand clearly and to articulate their understanding of God's plan for their youth ministry. If they do, they will be able to select and use the appropriate programs and ministry resources available to them.

II. Service opportunities abound

Four distinct service programs are being offered in 1999 through Youth Unlimited. Twenty-three different SERVE projects are available in 1999, where students and leaders will engage in diaconal tasks and spiritual-growth activities for one week. In the United States, Canada, and Honduras, teens will be offered the chance to put their faith into action to help others in need. There is capacity for 1,450 participants. SWIM is continuing its partnership with CRC Home Missions in providing evangelistic assistance for over forty churches. Project Bridge offers high school students two-week mission trips that provide the chance to break down the walls of race that can divide us—four such trips within the U.S. and one in the African country of Zambia. To provide churches with low-cost, innovative ways to make a difference through service in their own areas, R.A.K.E. is available. Youth Unlimited also makes available to all

member churches a manual with proven service activities designed for early teen and senior high students.

III. Early Teen Ministries

Youth Unlimited is in its second year of providing youth-ministry resources designed for coed ministry with seventh and eighth graders. Regional rallies, retreats, and Main Events can begin to happen in any area through a simple contact with Youth Unlimited. For the first time this summer Youth Unlimited is also offering a pilot SERVE project designed for early teens. As interest in this program grows, more SERVE sites will become available across North America.

IV. "Whisper It Loud!"

July 2-6 is the date, and the beautiful campus of U.C.L.A. is the place for the 1999 Youth Unlimited convention. Featuring Ken Medema and a host of dynamic youth-ministry speakers, the "Whisper It Loud!" convention offers to teens and adult leaders some of the best inspirational and evangelistic programming anywhere.

V. Memberships available

As one of the denominationally approved youth-ministry agencies of the CRC, Youth Unlimited offers membership to all CRC congregations. Receiving no ministry shares from the CRC, Youth Unlimited relies upon the donations of the local churches through the faith-promise membership donations. Member and nonmember churches are urged to consider special offerings for Youth Unlimited to assist in the mission efforts of this ministry to the youth of the CRC.

<div align="center">Youth Unlimited
Brian Bosscher, executive director</div>

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is the standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee members are Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (chair), Mrs. Swenna Harger, Rev. William Buursma, Dr. James Bratt, and Dr. Richard Harms (ex officio).

II. Archives staff

The archives are located in Heritage Hall at Calvin College and are staffed by Dr. Richard Harms, denominational archivist; Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor and Ms. Boukje Leegwater, assistant archivists; Dr. Robert Bolt, assistant archivist and denominational field agent; Dr. Henry Ippel, adjunct field agent; Rev. Marinus Goote, archival assistant; Rev. Henry Baak, Rev. Henry De Mots, Dr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Hendrick Harms, Mr. Stephen Lambers, Mr. Ed Start, Rev. Leonard Sweetman, Mr. Cornelius Van Duyn, Dr. Cornelius Van Nuis, and Mrs. Elaine Watterson, volunteers; Lynette Den Bleyker and Betsy Verduin, student assistants.

III. Archival work during 1998

During the past year the archivists

A. Maintained contact with thirty-nine of the forty-seven classes via regional representatives (contact people). Eight classes (Alberta South/Saskatchewan, Hackensack, Hamilton, Muskegon, Northern Illinois, Pacific Hanmi, Quinte, and Thornapple Valley) are without regional representatives.

B. Acquired archival records from sixty-seven Christian Reformed congregations, thirty-seven classes, and five Christian-school organizations. Ten classes sent no minutes to the archives for 1998.

C. Microfilmed minutes, reports, and other records from various CRCNA congregations and agencies and received material from and reworked collection registers of thirty-four individuals or families associated with the CRC ministry, congregations, Calvin College, or Calvin Theological Seminary.

D. Published the eighteenth newsletter, which was sent to all regional representatives, classical stated clerks, the Dutch-American Historical Commission, editors of relevant periodicals, and others in the denomination.

E. Began combining several files containing biographical data on the approximately 2,500 CRCNA ministers into a single system and collected uniform biographical data on each.

F. Reorganized the storage areas to take advantage of new space provided by Calvin College to alleviate acute overcrowding.

IV. Publications

CRC Publications produced *Our Family Album* by James C. Schaap. The book has been well received because it provides the general reader insight into the major developments that shaped and continue to shape the denomination.

The committee has begun supporting an early draft manuscript detailing Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte's place in the *Afscheiding* of 1834. The committee continues to explore methods of raising endowed funds to cover start-up costs of future publications. It welcomes suggestions on this initiative.

V. Historic sites

During the year the committee learned that the congregation at Graafschap, Michigan, was contemplating a new church building. Since the Graafschap church is one of the oldest in the CRC—the original dates to 1863—the committee corresponded with the congregation about the significance of the structure to the entire denomination. As a result, the committee appointed a subcommittee to collect data on all structures and sites significant in the denomination's history and to propose a plan for preserving these buildings and sites. This project will require raising denominational awareness of its physical heritage and encouraging assistance in its preservation.

VI. Recognition

A. On behalf of the denomination the committee extends its appreciation to the family of Mrs. Elaine Watterson, a volunteer who served the archives well for many years. Mrs. Watterson died on July 15, 1998. The committee also recognizes the efforts of Rev. Marinus Goote, who suffered a stroke in October 1998 and has not been able to return to his work in the archives. After retiring from the active ministry, Rev. Goote had a second career as the archivist responsible for organizing most of the collections of individuals and families.

B. The committee acknowledges six years of service by Dr. James Bratt and thanks him for his many contributions.

C. The committee acknowledges the following ministers who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ministry:

70 years	Menzo Dornbush
	Leonard Verduin
60 years	John Blankespoor
	William Dryfhout
	Garrett Pars
	Tenis C. Van Kooten
50 years	Louis J. Dykstra
	John A. Petersen
	William D. Ribbens
	Gerrit Vander Plaats
	Dick L. Van Halsema

D. The committee acknowledges that the following churches are celebrating special anniversaries in 1999:

75th anniversary	Alameda, California

50th anniversary	Aylmer, Ontario
	Bethany, Bloomfield, Ontario
	Immanuel, Brampton, Ontario
	Clinton, Ontario
	Elmhurst, Illinois
	Escalon, California
	Iron Springs, Alberta
	Trinity, Jenison, Michigan
	Maranatha, St. Catharines, Ontario
	Ebenezer, Trenton, Ontario
	Bethel, Tucson, Arizona
	Maranatha, Woodstock, Ontario
25th anniversary	Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois
	Community, Fort Wayne, Indiana
	Trinity, Richfield Springs, New York
	Covenant, Sioux Center, Iowa
	Trinity, Sparta, Michigan

VII. Reminders

A. The committee urges congregations that have observed or soon will observe twenty-fifth, fiftieth, and seventy-fifth anniversaries to send copies of any commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video tapes, etc.) to the archives. This is an easy means for preserving vital information.

B. Of the 830 organized congregations in the Christian Reformed Church, 160 (19 percent) have not sent their minutes to the archives for microfilming. The committee asks the congregations to use this very inexpensive means to produce back-up copies, which are maintained under secured conditions to ensure confidentiality.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That if synod so requests, Dr. Richard Harms represent the committee when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.

B. That one candidate from the following pair be elected to the committee for a three-year term to replace Dr. James Bratt, who has served the maximum of two terms:

Dr. Harry Boonstra, member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, serves as theological librarian at Calvin College.

Rev. Tymen Hofman, retired minister, is a member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

> Historical Committee
> James D. Bratt, secretary
> William D. Buursma
> Swenna Harger
> Richard Harms (ex officio)
> Henry Zwaanstra, chair

Interchurch Relations Committee

I. Membership

The members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) (with the years in which their terms expire) are Dr. Lyle Bierma (1999); Rev. Peter W. Brouwer (2000); Rev. Jason Chen (1999); Mrs. Claire Elgersma (2001); Rev. Robert J. Haven (2001); Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary (2000); Mrs. Cynthia Roelofs (2000); Rev. Edward Van Baak, president (1999); Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, vice president (2001); and the general secretary, Dr. David Engelhard (ex officio). Nominations for membership are submitted below. Because Dr. Lyle Bierma and Rev. Jason Chen are completing their first terms, their names will be presented to synod as single nominees, according to the regulations adopted by Synod 1998 (*Acts of Synod 1998,* pp. 406-07).

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

In 1998 the IRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Netherlands Reformed Churches/Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NRC/NGK), meeting in May 1998, Dr. David Engelhard.

2. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), meeting at the Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado, June 25-27, 1998, Dr. David Engelhard.

3. To the Reformed Church in America, meeting at Hope College, Holland, Michigan, June 5-10, 1998, Rev. Michael De Vries.

4. To the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, meeting at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, June 12-19, 1998, Rev. Robert Haven.

5. To the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), meeting in the Reformed Church of Wainuiomate, New Zealand, October 17-23, 1998, Rev. Peter Brouwer.

6. To the 210th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, June 12-20, 1998, Mrs. Cynthia Roelofs. IRC appointed Mrs. Roelofs as its representative in response to an invitation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that a "fraternal representative" be sent to its 210th General Assembly, a special occasion to which all Reformed and Presbyterian churches were invited.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the mandate of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the IRC appoints representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These appointees report to the IRC.

1. Dr. David H. Engelhard is a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and currently serves as a

member of its Presidential Search Committee and as chairman pro tem of its Nominating Committee. Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, as immediate past chairman of the NAE board of directors, is a member of its Executive Committee.

2. Dr. George Vandervelde was appointed by the IRC to serve as observer to the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, December 3-14, 1998. He was there in a double role, as observer for the CRCNA and as delegated representative for the World Evangelical Fellowship. His extensive report has been distributed to the members of the IRC and will be placed on the agenda of its April 23, 1999, meeting. Dr. Vandervelde also serves as the IRC observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches.

3. Dr. Henry Zwaanstra serves as the IRC observer to the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). He attended a meeting of CANAAC in Austin, Texas.

III. Ecumenical organizations

A. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)
The twenty-fourth annual meeting of NAPARC was held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, November 17-18, 1998, and was hosted by the Reformed Church in the United States, the newest member denomination of NAPARC. All member churches were represented. CRC delegates were Rev. Peter Brouwer and Dr. David H. Engelhard.

1. Reports were received from each member church as well as from observers representing nonmember denominations. Prayer was offered for each church after its report was received.

2. CRCNA membership in NAPARC
At the NAPARC meetings in 1996 the delegation from the Presbyterian Church in America offered a resolution "that NAPARC initiate the process to suspend the Christian Reformed Church in North America from its membership" (*Agenda for Synod 1997,* pp. 224-25). The motion was placed before the 1997 meeting of NAPARC, and after discussion, a unit-rule vote resulted in the adoption of the motion. The resolution was adopted by a 6 to 1 vote, only the CRCNA voting against the motion.
In a letter to the interchurch-relations committees of NAPARC churches (Jan. 1998), secretary Donald Duff explained:

> This does not mean that the Christian Reformed Church in North America is presently suspended from membership in NAPARC. It does mean, according to the Constitution of NAPARC, that "this proposal must then be approved within three years by two-thirds of the major assemblies of the member churches." Each member church should consider this matter at the major assembly level. For your information the Constitution of NAPARC defines a suspended church membership as follows: "A suspended church may send delegates to meetings of the Council but they shall not vote nor may that church be represented on the Interim Committee."

The IRC sent letters of response to the assemblies/synods of the NAPARC member churches asking that they consider seriously several

reasons for maintaining the membership of the CRCNA in NAPARC. Each church was asked to "take the opportunity and the time once more to consider the matter from the perspective of the CRCNA." Relevant materials for reflection were sent to each church.

At the November 1998 meeting of NAPARC, its secretary reported on the actions of the major assemblies of the member churches concerning the matter of the suspension of the CRCNA. The assemblies of five member churches voted to suspend CRCNA membership in NAPARC, including the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Reformed Church in the United States, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA). The assembly of the Korean American Presbyterian Church did not vote on the matter. The chairman "read the Constitution Section V:3 concerning suspension of a member church and declared that as a result of the action taken by the requisite number of major bodies the CRCNA is now suspended as a member in NAPARC" (Minutes of NAPARC, Nov. 17-18, 1998, Art. III, p. 2).

Following the chairman's declaration Rev. Peter Brouwer and Dr. David Engelhard read the following letter, which had been prepared by the IRC:

> November 9, 1998 North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
> Reverend Donald Duff, Secretary
> Box P
> Willow Grove, PA 19090
>
> Dear Brothers:
>
> The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and its Interchurch Relations Committee have observed the process leading to the suspension of the CRC's membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). We express our sincere regret and deep disappointment in the decision which has been finalized at this meeting. In spite of our appeals to the assemblies/synods of the NAPARC churches asking that they not approve the decision, the process has been finalized.
>
> The CRCNA is still in agreement with the basis of NAPARC as set forth in its constitution, and it stands where it stood as a charter member when NAPARC was organized.
>
> As a Reformed confessional church we confess the plenary inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture as the only rule for faith and life, and we affirm the Reformed confessions. We do not differ from any NAPARC churches about the authority of Holy Scripture, but only with the interpretation of some passages as they relate to women in ecclesiastical office. We regret that our position with respect to women in ecclesiastical office was never discussed openly in a plenary session of NAPARC.
>
> We are persuaded that more could be accomplished by NAPARC and its member churches working together in the American scene rather than being separated as the suspension procedure has done.
>
> May God grant wisdom to us all as we seek to follow his leading in faith and obedience.
>
> For the Interchurch Relations Committee of the
> Christian Reformed Church in North America
>
> Leonard J. Hofman
> Administrative Secretary

As a suspended church the CRC may send delegates to the meetings, and they are permitted to speak on matters being discussed by the council,

but they may not vote. The CRC may not serve on the Interim Committee of NAPARC and is not expected to pay dues while in its suspended status.

B. *Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)*

1. Mrs. Claire Elgersma, first clerk of the REC and an IRC member, reported on contacts made in June and July 1998 with several churches while she was in Korea and Japan on behalf of the REC.

2. The IRC received a letter from the REC, addressed to its member churches, bringing to our attention the financial future of the REC. A variety of factors are contributing to the financial struggle that the REC is experiencing. Because the REC belongs to its member churches, and the CRCNA is numbered among them, the IRC is considering the content of the letter with a view to possible solutions or advice. The IRC appreciates the good and cooperative relationship that prevails between the REC and our IRC.

3. Jubilee 2000. The IRC brings to the attention of synod a June 23, 1998, resolution of the Interim Committee of the REC along with a September 21, 1998, letter of Dr. Richard L. van Houten, general secretary of the REC. Both documents address the matter of REC member churches supporting international efforts to reduce or forgive international debt for highly indebted poor countries of the world. The documents appear at the close of this report as Appendix D. The matter has been given to a subcommittee of the IRC for review and recommendation.

C. *World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)*

The IRC reported on its contact with WARC to Synod 1998 (*Agenda for Synod 1998*, pp. 175-76; *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 293). Dr. Richard van Houten served as an observer representing the CRCNA to the twenty-third general council meeting of WARC in Debrecen, Hungary, August 8-19, 1997. Dr. Henry Zwaanstra serves as observer to the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of WARC. Dr. David Engelhard and Rev. Robert Haven represented the IRC as observers at CANAAC, January 29 - February 1, 1998, in Decatur, Georgia.

Additionally, Rev. Merle Den Bleyker of Christian Reformed World Missions attended the "Mission in Unity" consultation jointly sponsored by WARC and the John Knox Center in April 1998 in Geneva, Switzerland.

While in attendance at the quadrennial synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, meeting in Pretoria in October 1998, Dr. David Engelhard, Rev. Leonard Hofman, Rev. Richard Williams, and Dr. Richard van Houten met with representatives of WARC, namely, Dr. Milan Opocensky, general secretary; Ms. Bukelwa Hans (Presbyterian Church of South Africa); and Dr. Pieter Holtrop (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland), members of the executive committee of WARC. Dr. Opocensky indicated that to be separate is an impoverishment for both WARC and the CRCNA. A worthwhile discussion took place, and position materials are being gathered as the IRC considers whether to recommend that the CRC should apply for membership. However, the IRC decided to complete its review and revision of the Ecumenical Charter prior to presenting a recommendation relative to membership in WARC. This decision is in keeping with Synod 1997's referral of Overture 29 to the IRC "for

consideration as the committee pursues its review of the Ecumenical Charter" (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 637).

D. National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)

The 1999 Evangelical Summit and Fifty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the NAE was held in Orlando, Florida, February 28 - March 2, 1999. The convention was attended by representatives of the NAE's forty-nine member denominations, individual congregations from other denominations, independent churches, parachurch ministries, and educational institutions. Reports were received from its subsidiary, the World Relief Corporation (WRC); eight commissions; and five affiliates. Resolutions were formulated on various issues of current importance.

Dr. David Engelhard represented the CRCNA at this convention. He has been serving as a member of the committee searching for a new president for the NAE. At its January 11, 1999, meeting the NAE Executive Committee selected a nominee for presentation to the NAE board of directors at its annual meeting in February.

The NAE office for governmental affairs has moved to a more convenient and less costly location in Washington, D.C. The World Relief Corporation continues to carry on an active and effective ministry under the leadership of Dr. Clive Calver.

IV. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)
Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN)

The IRC has diligently sought to fulfill its synodical mandate to "intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520). Ecumenical representatives of the RCN and the CRCNA have met during the last several years both in the Netherlands and the United States. Reports on these meetings were presented to synod in 1997 and 1998.

As reported to Synod 1998, the memorandum of understanding which was agreed upon by both RCN and CRCNA delegations in January 1998 makes reference to the IRC's willingness to "consider recommending to synod the reinstatement of the provision of ecclesiastical fellowship relating to 'joint action in areas of common responsibilities'" (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 307). Although the Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the RCN is disappointed that our IRC has not brought forward such a recommendation to synod, the IRC has reviewed the matter and has taken the following action:

a. That IRC withhold making a decision at this time regarding the reinstatement of the provision of ecclesiastical fellowship re the possibility of engaging in joint action together as found in the third statement of the *Memorandum of Understanding* between the CRCNA and the RCN delegations in January 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 307).

Grounds:
1) The revision of the CRCNA Ecumenical Charter is not yet complete and the proposed categories for relationships and their provisions are not yet fully formulated and adopted.
2) The regulations for ecumenical relationships within the Samen op Weg (Together on the Way) churches and how we would relate to the GKN following federation need further clarification and stipulation.

b. That IRC propose to the RCN that another face-to-face conversation be held during the calendar year 1999 with an agenda mutually designed and agreed upon by both churches.

Grounds:
1) The decision of Synod 1998 reinforced the mandate of Synod 1996 which specified intensified conversations.
2) The good spirit between our churches produced by the last two conversations needs to be nurtured.
3) The meeting will provide the opportunity to receive updates on church developments, clarify any misunderstandings, and inquire into theological, confessional, and ethical developments such as those relating to Kuitert, den Heyer, and pedophilia.
4) The meeting will provide the opportunity for exploring specific "joint projects" before the IRC decides whether to recommend reinstatement of that provision of ecclesiastical fellowship.
5) The meeting will allow the IRC to update the RCN on its charter and other developments in the CRCNA.

(IRC Minutes, Dec. 11, 1998)

The IRC has invited representatives of the RCN to come to the United States for this next round of talks either in May 1999 or in the fall of 1999.

V. Reformed Churches in South Africa

Two primary reasons motivated the IRC to send a delegation of three to South Africa. First, churches in South Africa in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA had not been visited since 1991, or earlier. We have not nurtured our relationships as we should have. In addition, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRCSA) has asked the CRCNA to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with it, and the meeting of its quadrennial synod in October 1998 provided a good opportunity to learn more about the DRCSA and to meet with some of the leadership of that church. The delegation of Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, and Rev. Richard E. Williams visited with representatives of the Reformed Churches in South Africa in Pretoria, attended the general synodical commission of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa in Bloemfontein, and observed the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church meeting in Pretoria.

Reports on visits with each of the above-named churches are attached to this report as Appendix A. Appendix A, IV includes background information that relates to CRCNA contact with the DRCSA since 1978.

VI. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

As reported in the *Acts of Synod 1998* (p. 295), Rev. Peter Brouwer was appointed to serve as fraternal delegate to the synod of the RCNZ, meeting October 17-23, 1998, in the Reformed Church of Wainuiomate, New Zealand. The IRC considered it to be urgent and important to delegate one of its members to be present at that synod because information had been received that the RCNZ would consider whether or not to terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA at that synod.

Rev. Brouwer provided clarification with respect to various areas of concern that the RCNZ had raised in recent correspondence. There seemed to be satisfaction with his explanation. However, although there were speeches for and against terminating fellowship with the CRCNA and the voice votes for and against sounded about equal, the chair ruled that the motion to terminate

was carried. According to the RCNZ minutes, synod decided "to acknowledge with regret that we can no longer continue our sister church relationship with the CRCNA." Rev. Brouwer reported that the RCNZ decided to terminate its relationship with the CRCNA because "the CRCNA is misusing the Scriptures by finding a way for women to be admitted to the ecclesiastical offices." A copy of the letter notifying the IRC of the RCNZ decision appears as Appendix B of this report.

VII. Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA)

At its April 24, 1998, meeting the IRC received a letter from Rev. David Groenenboom, ecumenical secretary of the RCA, in which he asks that the CRCNA study a gravamen received by the RCA re the statement "he descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed. To assist in the study, the IRC was provided the text of the original gravamen document (1994), the Reformed Churches of Australia Report 16 to its Synod 1997, and the decisions of the Reformed Churches of Australia synod re the gravamen in question. The IRC acknowledged receipt of the material and appointed a committee to study it, which is in keeping with the fifth provision of ecclesiastical fellowship, namely, "communication on major issues of joint concern." Those requested to serve on the study committee were Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (convener), Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. Richard Muller, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

The IRC received a report from the subcommittee and thanked it for its thorough and concise work. The IRC also decided to forward the report to Synod 1999 with the recommendations that synod review the report, adopt its six recommendations, and respond to the RCA. The report appears as Appendix C of this report.

VIII. Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ)

Although the Reformed Church of Japan has been faithful and regular in sending fraternal delegates to the synod of the CRCNA, the IRC has not in recent years delegated any of its committee members to serve as fraternal delegates to the RCJ.

The IRC judges that it is important to send a delegation to meet with this church in 1999. Therefore, it has appointed Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Edward Van Baak, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra to serve as a delegation to the synod of the RCJ in October 1999.

The IRC also considers it important to increase its acquaintance with the Reformed/Presbyterian churches in Korea. Invitations have been received, but rather than singling out one denomination for a face-to-face conversation with IRC representatives, the committee has requested the CRC delegation to Japan to meet also with several leaders from the churches in Korea. Such a meeting will not only help to understand the complexities of the Korean churches in their relationship to one another, but it will also provide guidance to the IRC in initiating steps toward establishing ecclesiastical relationships with one or more Korean denominations.

IX. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

Although the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) are churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA, the general assemblies of both have

voted to suspend the membership of the CRCNA in NAPARC. It is of further interest that, although the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has voted to suspend CRCNA membership in NAPARC, it continues to have a multilateral ecclesiastical relationship with the CRCNA through its membership in the NAE. In March 1998 representatives of the PCA promised to initiate correspondence with the CRCNA toward a formal relationship between our churches. To date no such communication has been received.

A. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

The CRCNA continues to enjoy good and vital ecclesiastical ties with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, both as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and as members of the NAE. From time to time EPC representatives meet with agencies of the CRCNA to gather information and learn how to become more effective in ministry. The interchurch-relations committees of both churches are interested in discovering new relationships as denominations—neither seems to be welcome as a regular member of NAPARC. The EPC and the CRCNA enjoy mutual appreciation and support.

B. Reformed Church in America (RCA)

Synod 1998 approved the concept of union churches as originally proposed by the RCA (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 379). Synod proposed the following addition to the Church Order as Article 38-f:

> f. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may unite to form union congregations with one or more particular congregations of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, with the approval of classis.

This proposed change in the Church Order needs to be adopted by a following synod (cf. Church Order Art. 47).

X. Ecumenical Charter (see *Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 181)

The IRC has given considerable attention to the review and revision of the Ecumenical Charter through subcommittees appointed to address various sections of the charter, the review of draft revisions, conference calls, and discussions at regular meetings. The draft revisions were reviewed at IRC's January 15, 1999, meeting. Subcommittees have been asked to make additional changes/insertions so that a final revision may be adopted at our April 1999 meeting for recommendation to synod. It is anticipated that synod may wish to refer the document to the churches prior to final adoption (cf. *Acts of Synod 1985,* p. 729, and *Acts of Synod 1987*, pp. 587-88).

XI. Dialogue with Roman Catholic Church

After having responded to Overture 16, Synod 1998 directed "the Interchurch Relations Committee to make an attempt to dialogue with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church to clarify the official doctrine of that church concerning the mass" (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 427). The IRC has appointed Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. Ronald Feenstra, Dr. David Engelhard, and Dr. George Vandervelde to carry out that task. An initial meeting took place on January 27-28, 1999, in Washington, D.C.

XII. Nominations for committee members

The three-year terms of Dr. Lyle Bierma and Rev. Jason Chen expire on June 30, 1999. They are eligible for reelection and will appear on the synodical ballot as incumbent nominees. Rev. Edward Van Baak is completing his second three-year term and is therefore not eligible for reelection.

Dr. Lyle Bierma is presently professor of theology at Reformed Bible College. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and he received his Ph.D. in church history from Duke University. He is the nominee for the position of professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. He is a member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Rev. Jason Chen is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary. He is director of campus ministry at the University of Iowa, Iowa City. He served as delegate to REC ATHENS 1992 and was appointed as adviser to REC GRAND RAPIDS 1996. He also served as chair of the synodical Committee to Study the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God.

For the position presently held by Rev. Edward Van Baak

Rev. Michiel M. De Berdt, a member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, served CR World Missions as a missionary to Japan for thirty-three years. He received his theological training in Louvain, Belgium, and was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church in 1955. He left the priesthood, studied Reformed theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, and was ordained into the ministry of the CRC in 1962. He served World Missions in Japan in areas north and east of Tokyo. After retirement in 1995, the De Berdts spent three years in Amsterdam, where Rev. De Berdt served as pastor of the Japanese Christian Fellowship.

Rev. Edward P. Meyer is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Following his ordination to the ministry in 1958, he served as a missionary in Argentina for thirteen years. Subsequently, he served churches in Washington, Michigan, and Indiana and worked with The Bible League for seven years. Since his retirement in 1998 he has resided in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

XIII. Representation at synod

Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (president), Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary) have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 1999, along with other IRC members as necessary.

XIV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (president), Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary), along with other IRC members as necessary, be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the IRC are discussed.

B. That synod review the report re the request of the Reformed Churches of Australia, adopt its six recommendations, and respond to the RCA (see Section VII and Appendix C).

C. That synod elect members to the IRC from nominations provided (see Section XII).

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Interchurch Relations Committee
Lyle Bierma
Peter W. Brouwer
Jason Chen
Claire Elgersma
David H. Engelhard (ex officio)
Robert J. Haven
Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary
Cynthia Roelofs
Edward A. Van Baak, president
Henry Zwaanstra, vice president

</div>

Appendix A
Report of the Delegation of the Interchurch Relations Committee to South Africa

I. Reformed Churches in South Africa/Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (RCSA/GKSA)

Early in our visit to South Africa in October 1998 the IRC delegation met with the RCSA's Deputies for Correspondence with Churches in Foreign Countries at the home of one of their ministers near Pretoria. Although we were graciously feasted with a wonderful breakfast, the atmosphere of the meeting was tense and formal. Before the meeting was completed, however, many differences had been discussed, and the initial tensions were relaxed so that we departed on a much more positive note.

The relationship between the CRCNA and the RCSA has its roots in the nineteenth century (1866) and was initially fostered by the personal relationship between Rev. Douwe J. Vander Werp (CRC) and Rev. Dirk Postma (RCSA). The relationship has waxed and waned during more than a century of contact; it was severely strained in the 1980s, when the CRC judged that the RCSA's position with regard to apartheid required the suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship (see *Acts of Synod 1989*, pp. 360-74, 495-96). To understand some of the tensions in our present relationship, one needs to be familiar with the contents of the 1989 report.

In 1996 the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) recommended to synod that the suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship be lifted with respect to the RCSA. IRC's report to Synod 1996 presented seven observations and four grounds to support its recommendation to lift suspension (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 385-86, 526-27). Synod 1996 acted favorably on the recommendation of the IRC.

After the RCSA were informed about the CRC's action, they responded by renewing their concern about the original suspension, which they thought was unwarranted, and by initiating new concerns about the CRC, namely its

position about women serving in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. A face-to-face meeting was long overdue, and it is unfortunate that it didn't take place until late 1998.

The tensions experienced initially by the CRC delegation in its meeting with representatives of the RCSA are in large measure explained by the tensions between our denominations since the early 1980s. We had concluded that they were aiding and abetting the cause of apartheid by not taking a clear public stand against it, and they judged that we were unwilling to recognize that their ecclesiology prevented them from dealing with matters that were political/governmental and not ecclesiastical. Their polity has a provision like that of the CRC's Church Order Article 28-a ("assemblies shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner"). Since the CRC identified apartheid as an ethical issue which was supported by biblical-theological arguments in South Africa, it could not understand why the RCSA would use their polity constraints to remain silent on such an issue. Even though the relationship has been restored by the lifting of the suspension, the fundamentally conflicting ways of dealing with apartheid in the past have not been fully resolved. Tension continues.

Our delegation would have been pleased to hear from the RCSA that they had taken a definite stand against apartheid and had recognized it for what it was, i.e., wrong and sinful. Their position, however, is that they never approved the apartheid system of South Africa and, therefore, they have no reason to make a declaration against it. Furthermore, some in their churches may even argue that a "benign apartheid" is permissible if it does not lead to evil consequences. Such is the complexity of the discussions with the RCSA.

In spite of continuing differences between us, the tone of the meeting became more amicable as we met together. We spoke about our respective synods' positions on women in office, biblical hermeneutics, Christ as the only way of salvation, infant baptism, and their perception that some in the CRC are allowing both infant baptism and infant dedication followed by believer's baptism.

Ecclesiastical fellowship has been restored, and we discussed ways to nurture that relationship in the future. They spoke of their next synod, in 2000, and requested our presence at that meeting. Together we agreed to share our reports before they are sent to our respective synods.

Given the congenial atmosphere between delegations when we parted company, we were disappointed and shocked to hear that one of their representatives at the synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) argued that the RCNZ should terminate relations with us and declared that the RCSA were also moving in that direction. These seemingly mixed messages lead us to question the veracity of their spokesmen. We sincerely hope that what we heard in South Africa was authentic and that what was said in New Zealand was an unwarranted aberration. The truth in this matter needs to be clarified as we move forward with this relationship.

II. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA)

The general synodical commission of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) met in Bloemfontein on October 19-22, 1998. The CRC delegation was warmly welcomed to the meeting and was permitted a presence at the discussion table for the duration of its visit. We brought

greetings, and in response we received greetings to our churches in which the relationship between our churches was prized, our well-being was prayed for, and our churches were challenged to adopt the Belhar Confession as their own.

The URCSA was formed in 1994 as a merger of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC). The URCSA has faced a number of internal and external challenges since it was formed. Furthermore, the struggling economy in South Africa has made the financial difficulties for its churches particularly acute. God's providential care, however, is attested, and many leaders speak of the strength and courage they have received as a blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Just prior to the URCSA's general synodical commission meeting, the quadrennial general synod of the Dutch Reformed Church had concluded, at which several key decisions were made which had an effect upon the URCSA. The DRC made a declaration regarding apartheid in which it rejected "apartheid as wrong and sinful, not simply in its effects and operations, but also in its fundamental nature." This declaration was made as part of a resolution between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the DRC as the means to restore full membership of the DRC in WARC.

The DRC also dealt with the acceptance of the Belhar Confession and the process of unification of the Reformed family of churches in South Africa. The Belhar Confession was adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church at Belhar in 1986. It became one of the confessions of the URCSA when it formed in 1994. URCSA has maintained that Belhar must be received as one of the confessions of any new, unified church in South Africa. The DRC was not ready to accept Belhar even though it did acknowledge that this confession does not contradict its other confessional standards.

The rejection of Belhar was a crushing blow to the URCSA, and it generated a prolonged and vigorous discussion about whether the URCSA should continue unification talks. Since the URCSA synod in 1997 had given the direction to engage in such talks, the commission members didn't think they had the authority to do otherwise. Where this will lead over the next two or three years is uncertain at this time.

We asked the commission for some advice as we consider pursuing ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRC. Acknowledging the tension which exists, we spoke of our mutual membership with the DRC in the Reformed Ecumenical Council and of the DRC's request that we establish a closer bilateral relationship. Neither publicly nor in small-group discussions were we asked to discontinue talks with the DRC. The URCSA did ask, however, that we continue to honor our relationship with it and not enter into a relationship with the DRC prematurely or in such a way that would damage the present relationship between the CRC and the URCSA.

The URCSA's challenge to the CRC to adopt the Belhar Confession needs further reflection. In 1990 the CRC synod adopted the following with regard to this confession:

> That synod endorse the IRC's evaluation (*Agenda for Synod 1990*, pp. 217-19) which judges that the Belhar Confession is in harmony with "the Reformed faith as a body of truth" articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and is in basic agreement with REC and CRC decisions on race made over the past decades;

and, therefore, that synod declare that it has no objection to its inclusion in the list of Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution.

The REC did not include the Belhar Confession in its list of Reformed confessions in 1992, when it met in Athens, in spite of support from several churches. Following the REC's refusal to adopt Belhar, the URCSA withdrew its membership from the REC.

The CRC has been reluctant to add new confessions to the so-called ecumenical creeds and the three forms of unity. Even the Contemporary Testimony ("Our World Belongs to God") has been granted a status lower than the other confessions. The URCSA challenges us to find a way to affirm Belhar. This would probably require a new category of "confessions of sister churches" which we acknowledge and/or endorse.

III.   Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRCSA)

The delegation served as observers at the quadrennial synod of the DRCSA, meeting at the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Synodaal Centrum in Pretoria in October 1998.

On October 11, 1998, the presynodical service was held at a large Dutch Reformed church served by five pastors, with Rev. Freek Swanepoel, past moderator of the DRCSA synod, as senior pastor. The language spoken at the service as well as at the synodical sessions was Afrikaans. We were provided separate seating and a simultaneous translation at the worship service and headsets for simultaneous translation at the synodical sessions.

Our delegation received a cordial welcome at the general synod. The moderator gave us a formal introduction to the four hundred delegates in attendance. The hospitality was warm and gracious.

Serving as the moderamen (officers) were Prof. Pieter Potgieter, moderator, from Bloemfontein; Dr. Mike Smuts, deputy; Rev. Cassie Carstens, scribe; Prof. Pieter Coertzen, actuary—Church Order. Our delegation was invited to have informal conversation with the moderamen over tea and were also invited to a luncheon meeting with them. The officers unanimously expressed their desire that the CRCNA take steps to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRC.

Our IRC delegation also had opportunity to meet with the general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), Dr. Milan Opocensky, and with Pieter Holtrop (GKN) and Bukelwa Hans of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, members of the WARC executive committee.

We mention our meetings with WARC members because of the action that was taken relative to the DRCSA's membership in WARC. A joint resolution had been hammered out at the WARC general council in 1997. Dr. Freek Swanepoel and Dr. Willie Botha were both involved in this effort. This joint resolution was adopted without change by the DRC synod, meeting in Pretoria, South Africa. In so doing the DRC declared without qualification that it "rejects apartheid as wrong and sinful, not simply in its effects and operations but also in its fundamental nature." With that, the suspension of the membership of the DRCSA in WARC was lifted.

WARC had suspended the membership of the DRC in 1982, when WARC declared a *status confessionis* over apartheid. This meant that churches that defended apartheid were in danger of heresy. Three conditions were to be met before suspension of the DRCSA's membership in WARC could be lifted. The

DRCSA had met the first two before, namely, opening its membership and making strides toward restoration of damages, but the third, an unequivocal rejection of apartheid, was considered met only with this decision of October 13, 1998.

This action bears directly on the reason why the CRCNA in 1982 could not take steps toward establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRCSA. The action adopted by the 1998 general synod of the DRCSA in effect removes the primary obstacle for the CRCNA to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRCSA.

Although the DRC took a positive step relative to the rejection of apartheid, tension remains between the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the DRC. The URCSA places great value upon its Belhar Confession, adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1986. It became one of the confessions of the URCSA when it organized in 1994. The URCSA believes it is necessary that the Belhar Confession be accepted as part of the confessional basis of a new, unified church in South Africa. To the URCSA this is a nonnegotiable condition. The leadership of URCSA was less than pleased with decisions taken by the DRCSA synod. In summary these are the decisions:

– The synod declared, on the basis of the comments received from church members and church meetings, that the Belhar Confession cannot be adopted as a fourth basic confession at this time.
– The synod declared that the Belhar Confession is not in conflict with the three forms of unity (namely, the Belgic or Netherlands Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort).
– The synod accepted the essential content of the Belhar Confession, for the sake of the unification process and for its own witness.

The DRC believes that the above decisions open the way for discussions leading to deeper unity among the Reformed denominations in South Africa.

In light of the above, it is the judgment of the IRC delegation that the following steps should be taken toward the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRC:

A. That the IRC request from the DRC documents—in English—that reflect the denomination's position on

1. Hermeneutics and the authority of Scripture
2. Apartheid
3. Such ethical issues as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia
4. Ecclesiastical office and ordination
5. The admission of women to ecclesiastical offices
6. Children at the Lord's Supper

B. That the IRC monitor the relationships between and among South African churches in the Reformed family, the relationships between those churches and the CRCNA, and the effect that establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRCSA may have on those relationships.

Grounds:

1. The DRCSA has repeatedly requested that ecclesiastical fellowship be established with the CRCNA.
2. The basic objection, namely the DRCSA position on apartheid, has been removed by official decision.
3. There is time to continue important and necessary communication between the CRCNA and the DRCSA prior to the DRCSA's next general synod, in 2002.

> David H. Engelhard
> Leonard J. Hofman
> Richard E. Williams

IV. A brief historical survey re ecclesiastical fellowship between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Christian Reformed Church in North America

In 1978 the DRC/NGK decided to seek ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. However, synods following 1978 did not act on that request. The IRC was attempting to evaluate the situation of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and its relationships with its daughter churches—the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA - black), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC - colored), and the Reformed Church in South Africa (RCSA - Indian). There was considerable tension between the DRC and its daughter churches.

In March 1981 the IRC sent Rev. Clarence Boomsma and Dr. John Kromminga to South Africa to investigate *in loco.* They were to investigate

- – The sisterly relationship of the DRC family of Reformed churches.
- – Access to the table of the Lord irrespective of race.
- – The status of the declaration *Human Relations in the South African Scene in Light of Scripture* (1974).
- – Participation in oath-bound commitments that interfere with brotherly relations in the body of Christ.

Synod 1981 took note of the special difficulties which the IRC faced relative to South African Reformed churches and asked our churches for prayer as the IRC prepared its report for 1982 (*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 101).

Following a lengthy report from the South African delegation, synod adopted the IRC's recommendation "that synod not enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) at this time."

Grounds:
a. Entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa now would seriously compromise our witness against racial discrimination and suggest an indifference to the plight of millions of nonwhite South Africans, including the black Reformed Christians, who suffer under the system of autogenous development which is supported and abetted by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.
b. The Christian Reformed Church ought not ignore the steadfast refusal of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa to seriously reconsider its position and to recognize the evil results in human tragedies that this policy has worked in family life, in personal lives, and in creating a society that engenders hate and foments violence.

(*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 60)

Synod 1982 also adopted a recommendation that synod take up the matter of ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRC after the Christian Reformed Church had received the requested response to its report and after the DRC had demonstrated genuine concern for and action to undo both the system and the evils of apartheid in the society in which it is strategically powerful (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 60).

Synod 1982 decided to "keep the door of communication open as we hope and pray with and for the DRC in its difficult circumstances," recognizing its confessional creeds, its historical origins, its piety and moral sensitivity in so many respects, its exemplary mission consciousness and success in evangelism among nonwhites of South Africa, and its institutions of mercy *(Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 60).

In 1982 the DRC took note of the report concerning the DRC adopted by our 1982 Synod. In 1983 Rev. Clarence Boomsma met with some leaders of the DRC while he was in Africa to bring greetings to the DRCA, its black daughter church. The DRC was asked to rethink its position on race in the light of Scripture.

The IRC noted that the October 1983 statements of the DRC Synod of the Western Cape showed some movement in the attitude of the DRC against apartheid. These are printed in the *Agenda for Synod 1984*, pages 170-72.

In 1985 the IRC reported that it had had no official contact with the DRC since "in 1982 our synod decided not to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with them until we saw considerable progress in their position on race relations and their practice" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 200).

The IRC sent a letter to the DRC urging it not to suspend its membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (now Reformed Ecumenical Council), as decided by its moderamen in January 1985, subject to the decision of the DRC general synod in 1986. Reasons for urging reconsideration were these:

– The Reformed churches should manifest their unity.
– The Reformed churches need to remain in communication in spite of grave differences.
– The DRC needs continuing ecumenical contact with other Reformed bodies. (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 200)

After 1982, contacts with the DRC were primarily through our common membership in the RES.

The general synod of the DRC, meeting in October 1986, adopted a new report on race relations entitled "Church and Society," which was widely hailed by some as a major shift away from the church's previous defense of apartheid, though others said it did not go far enough. A letter was sent by Dr. P. Rossouw, chief executive officer for ecumenical affairs, inviting the CRC to resume dialogue with the DRC in light of its new position. The IRC reported its intention to study the document and, if possible, to report to Synod 1988 what implications the new statement might have for CRC relationships with the DRC (*Agenda for Synod 1987*, pp. 166-67).

The IRC studied and critiqued the document and then learned that the DRC was presenting a completely revised edition of "Church and Society" to the DRC general synod in 1990. The critique was sent nevertheless.

In 1991 the IRC reported that it was waiting for an English translation of the revised "Church and Society." In 1992 the IRC reported that an English edition

of "Church and Society" was available and that the IRC was studying it with a view to future relations with the DRC.

No mention is made of the DRCSA in the *Acts of Synod* in the following years, more than likely because the focus of the IRC and synod was on the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA/GKSA).

In 1995 Prof. Pieter Meiring, director of information and ecumenical affairs for the DRC, present as observer at synod, expressed the desire of his denomination to become a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. Later that year a letter was received from the office of Dr. W.J. Botha, director of ecumenical affairs and information of the DRC, expressing "high regard for the CRCNA, for its ministry, and witness in North America as well as in many parts of the world." He made formal request that fraternal relations be established between the CRCNA and the DRC. In response the IRC invited the DRC delegates to the 1996 meetings of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (formerly the Reformed Ecumenical Synod) to meet with members of the IRC to discuss issues pertaining to an ecclesiastical relationship between our denominations (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 190).

Six members of the DRC met with members of the IRC at the Calvin College Fine Arts Center during REC 1996. They provided an update on developments in the process of church unification in the family of Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa, recent statements and decisions on the issue of apartheid, and a brief report on the DRC's involvement in the process of dismantling apartheid (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 229).

Appendix B

REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND
INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE
(I.R.C.)

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18 December, 1998

The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad
C/- Dr. David H. Engelhard
General Secretary CRCNA
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE Grand Rapids
Michigan 49560
USA

Dear brothers,

With deep sadness we write to inform you that our recent synod at Wainuiomata decided "to acknowledge with regret that we can no longer continue our sister church relationship with the CRC/NA".

Over the years we have greatly appreciated our contact with the CRC. We have been blessed by the ministers on loan that our churches have received, by the Back to God Hour, by our association with CRWM, our use of your Sunday School and Catechism materials and from the Psalter Hymnal, which is still used in its 1976 edition.

There remains much within the CRC that we can appreciate and in many ways aspire to. However, it is particularly your synod decision of 1995 to permit the ordination of women into the ruling and teaching offices that has caused immense grief amongst us and has led to the decision made by Synod 1998. For us this decision is a clear violation of 1Tim.2:12 and 1Cor.14:34,35. Our correspondence with you on this matter and other areas of concern goes back to 1990. Sadly, your decision of 1995 means that now, contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture, some of your congregations have women elders and there are some women who have been ordained as CRC ministers. Our churches do not believe that we can maintain a close sister church relationship with a church that permits women to serve as elders and ministers.

We thank you for sending Rev. Peter Brouwer as a delegate to our recent synod. We experienced delightful fellowship with him and his wife and we know that they and many others in the CRC sympathise greatly with the concerns of the RCNZ. However, notwithstanding Rev. Brouwer's strong plea for us to retain our ecumenical with the CRC, Synod regretfully decided that we cannot at this stage continue our sister church relationship.

We hope and pray that even now, the CRC would reconsider its decision of 1995 and return to a position that faithfully reflects the clear biblical directives in this matter.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Michael A. Flinn
Secretary: Interchurch Relations Committee

Appendix C
Committee to Study the Materials Received from the Reformed Churches of Australia re Christ's Descent into Hell

I. Introduction: Background, mandate, and structure of the report

In 1994 the synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) was presented with a gravamen against the statement "he descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed and in the explanation of the statement in the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) Question and Answer 44. The substance of the gravamen, as summarized by the ecumenical secretary of the RCA, was as follows:

– The physical descent of the Lord Jesus into hell is not taught in Scripture.
– While the use of the *descensus* still enjoys wide acceptance, this should not deter us from amending a creedal statement if the statement is deemed to be inaccurate or false.
– The explanation given to the statement in HC Q/A 44 underscores the fact that the Lord did not physically descend into hell.
– The phrase in question was a later addition to the text of the creed.

In 1994 the RCA synod referred the question to a study committee, which reported its findings to the synod of 1997. The majority of the three-member study committee recommended (A) that the text of the Apostles' Creed be changed to "he descended to the dead" or, failing that, (B) that it be replaced by the phrase "suffered the pangs of hell on the cross," which would be inserted after "crucified," or, failing that, (C) that the words "he descended into hell" be deleted from the text or, failing that, (D) that a footnote be added to the text of the Apostles' Creed explaining that "by this we understand that Christ suffered the pangs of hell just prior to and on the cross."

The RCA synod of 1997 sympathized with the gravamen and with some of the findings and recommendations of the study committee but believed it to be somewhat presumptuous to change the text of the creed unilaterally. The synod eventually decided to retain the present wording of the creed, to add an explanatory footnote similar to the one recommended by the study committee, and to submit the gravamen, study-committee report, and 1997 synodical decisions to the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) for consideration at its 2000 assembly. The synod also decided to send these materials to denominations with which the RCA is in ecclesiastical fellowship and to ask that they study the "descent" clause and report their conclusions and advice to the RCA. One of these churches in ecclesiastical fellowship is the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), whose Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) received the materials in February 1998.

At its April 1998 meeting the IRC reviewed the materials from the RCA and decided to appoint a committee with the following mandate:

a. To examine materials received from the Reformed Churches of Australia regarding the gravamen against the "descent into hell" clause in the Apostles' Creed.
b. To report, with advice, to the IRC at its December 1998 meeting.

<div align="right">(IRC Minutes of 4/24/98, Art. 5:5)</div>

Appointed to this committee were Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (convener), Dr. Lyle Bierma (secretary), Dr. Richard Muller, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

This study committee met three times over a four-month period in 1998. During these sessions the committee reviewed (A) the history of the CRC's own treatment of gravamina against the confessions, (B) the three documents from the RCA, and (C) an extensive historical-theological-exegetical study of the question prepared by Richard Muller. What follows is the fruit of that study and discussion, organized in the following way: first, a review of the subscription to and amendment of creeds and confessions in the CRCNA; second, a summary of some of the committee's own exegetical, historical, and theological study of the "descent" clause; third, a list of the objections to the "descent" clause raised in the RCA materials and elsewhere and the committee's responses to these objections; and, finally, the IRC's response to the official decisions of the 1997 RCA synod in the form of a set of recommendations to CRC Synod 1999.

II. Subscription to and amendment of creeds and confessions in the Christian Reformed Church in North America

A. *Subscription to creeds and confessions*

The Christian Reformed Church in North America requires all its professors, ministers, evangelists, elders, and deacons, when ordained and/or installed in office, to sign the Form of Subscription, thus indicating their agreement with the doctrinal standards of the church. Article 5 of the Church Order says, "All officebearers, on occasions stipulated by conciliar, classical, and synodical regulations, shall signify their agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Form of Subscription." The form presently in use was adopted by Synod 1988. The supplement to Article 5 includes a statement of guidelines and regulations for submitting gravamina asking for changes or amendments to the church's creeds and confessions and for understanding the meaning of subscription inherent in the signing of the Form of Subscription. The following guidelines pertain to subscription (CRC's Church Order Supplement, Art. 5):

1. The person signing the Form of Subscription subscribes without reservation to all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church, as being doctrines which are taught in the Word of God.
2. The subscriber *does not* by his subscription declare that the doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner, or that the standards of our church cover all that the Scriptures teach on the matter confessed. Nor does he declare that every teaching of the Scriptures is set forth in our confessions so that every heresy is rejected and refuted by them.
3. A subscriber is only bound by his subscription to those doctrines which are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines nor to the theological deductions which some may draw from the doctrines set forth in the confessions. However, no one is free to decide for himself or for the church what is and what is not the doctrine confessed in the standards. In the event that such a question should arise, the decision of the assemblies of the church shall be sought and acquiesced in.

B. *Amendment of creeds and confessions*

1. Belgic Confession Article 36

The CRC has amended only one of its articles of faith, Belgic Confession Article 36. It did so on three occasions. After the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN/GKN) amended Article 36 of the confession at the Synod of Utrecht in 1905, the Christian Reformed Church in 1910 decided to place an asterisk after the word "worship" in Article 36, dealing with the task of the civil magistrate. The sentence read, " . . . and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship,* that the kingdom of the antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted." The note attached rather extensively explained the relationship of the magistrate to the church after the Constantinian change and under circumstances of ecclesiastical establishment. This note affirmed as a matter of principle the independence of the church alongside of the state. Both state and the church were institutions of God with mutual rights and obligations. They nevertheless had their own territory and must not interfere with one another.

In 1936 the Calvin Seminary faculty sent a communication to the synod indicating that in its judgment an inconsistency or conflict existed in the church's creedal formulation of the proper relationship between the church and the state. Specifically, the faculty said, the conflict obtained between Article 36 of the confession and the note appended by Synod 1910. The note officially contradicted part of Article 36. The faculty, moreover, argued that an explanatory note should be added to a creed only if the creed is open to more than one interpretation and it becomes necessary to determine officially which of the various interpretations represents the conviction of the church. The note appended in 1910, the faculty claimed, was in no sense explanatory but instead frankly critical, and in fact it contradicted the confession. The note affirmed that religious freedom, the separation of church and state, and the lordship and kingship of Christ over his church were teachings demanded by the New Testament. If these teachings were really the conviction of the church, they should be expressed in the creed itself, since the creed was the formal and official declaration of the church's faith. The faculty's concern and communication were occasioned by fear of the rising totalitarian states and the very real possibility of infringements on religious freedom and the independence of the church.

Synod 1938 exscinded from Article 36 the following wording: "and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may thus be destroyed." In order to make the remaining words form a grammatically correct sentence, other slight changes were introduced. The complete sentence as amended read, "Their [the magistrates'] office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also to protect the sacred ministry* that the Kingdom of Christ may thus be promoted." The asterisk after "sacred ministry" signaled an appended note. The note contained the original text of the article and briefly presented the history of the changes made in it by the CRC in 1910 and 1938. The confessional change introduced by the CRC in 1938 was the same as that adopted by the RCN/GKN in 1905.

Not everyone, however, was satisfied with this change in wording. If religious freedom and the separation of church and state were indeed teachings demanded by the New Testament, why was the new wording any less objectionable than the original? Was not the magistrates' promotion of the kingdom of Christ as much a violation of the separation of church and state as the magistrates' removal of idolatry and false worship? After two more decades of wrestling with these questions, Synod 1958 provisionally accepted a second change to Article 36—a reformulation proposed by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Synod accepted the second change "with the intention of attaining to a final formulation of the controversial words of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession in united action with the other member churches of the RES [Reformed Ecumenical Synod] which maintain the Belgic Confession." The substitute statement was placed in a footnote to Article 36, but in 1985 it replaced the wording of the original text in the CRC's new translation of the Belgic Confession. At Synod 1985 a third change to Article 36 was also adopted, the removal of the paragraph referring to the detesting of the Anabaptists. The original paragraph was placed in a footnote.

2. Proposed modifications of other articles of the Belgic Confession

In 1952 Calvin Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids presented an overture to synod asking synod "to study the weight and relevancy" of objections raised by a member of that church to certain doctrinal expressions found in the Belgic Confession. These objections had to do with the listing of the books of the Bible, the author of Hebrews, the use of proof texts, and certain statements regarding the sacraments. The appointed study committee submitted majority and minority reports. Both reports recommended redactional modifications in the confession.

Synod 1957 decided not to adopt any changes in the confession without prior consultation with other Reformed churches holding the same confession. The same synod decided to appoint a new study committee to consider whether the proposed modifications should be made and to invite sister churches to respond to any redactional modifications the committee wished to propose.

In its report to Synod 1961, the study committee indicated that the problem of modifications of the confession could be approached in three different ways. The confession could be thoroughly revised and made up-to-date. Second, it could be edited and revised only insofar as was necessary to remove misunderstandings caused by the text itself. And, finally, the confession could be retained as it was. If the last option was followed, a reasoned statement indicating why no alterations should be made in the text of the creed would have to be presented.

The majority of the study committee supported the second option. They argued that the need for making some changes was supported by the fact that the present text might contribute to misunderstanding and might even say in some instances what the church did not want it to say. The majority proposed five redactional modifications.

A minority favored the third option and argued for retaining the confession as it was. The minority's basic contention was that, whenever a historical-textual approach to the confession offered satisfactory answers to

objections raised to it, the confession should not be subjected to redactional modifications. The minority presented arguments to support its position. Most pertinent were the following:

a. The demand for incidental corrections in the confession suggested a too literalistic approach. The confession could be wholeheartedly endorsed without insisting on a rigidly literal reading.

b. The modification of disputed passages would at best be a patchwork approach to the confession and would not touch the heart of the question: How should the confession be approached to gain a proper understanding of it?

c. The confession admittedly was intended to speak meaningfully to its readers. In the judgment of the minority, the confession still did so, even though it was four hundred years old.

d. Most importantly, a historical-textual approach to the confession would provide satisfactory answers to the objections raised. Keeping the Belgic Confession in its proper historical context and applying sound exegetical methods to it could greatly alleviate the difficulties and at least satisfactorily explain them.

The synod followed the judgment of the minority and did not accede to the suggested alterations.

3. Apostles' Creed

The Christian Reformed Church has never amended an ecumenical creed. Synod 1988 approved a new English translation of the Apostles' Creed. This new translation included four revisions of the older version. The word "creator" replaced "maker," the word "begotten" was deleted, "died" replaced "was dead," and the words "I believe" before the confession of the holy catholic church were also deleted. The translation committee argued for these revisions on the basis of the original Latin text (textus receptus). Despite overtures asking that the word "universal" be substituted for "catholic" in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding between the church confessed in the creed and the Roman Catholic Church, the committee decided to retain the word "catholic." The committee did so because it could not find a word to replace "catholic" that affirmed both the historical and worldwide character of the church. The synod, however, decided to place an asterisk after the word "catholic" and to attach this explanatory note: "that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places."

In summary, the Christian Reformed Church three times amended a single article of its confessions (Belgic Confession Article 36) because it was deemed to be in conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture. It also once added an explanatory note to one of its ecumenical creeds. Rather than opting for incidental and occasional redactional modifications of its confessions, the Christian Reformed Church has followed a historical-textual approach to understanding them. The guidelines stated in the Church Order Supplement, Article 5 enable the Christian Reformed Church to be a confessional Reformed church with integrity, while at the same time

recognizing the historical character of the confessions and the distinctive manner in which they express themselves.

III. Historical, theological, and exegetical considerations re the "descent" clause

In thinking about what the clause "he descended into hell" means and whether it should be removed from the Apostles' Creed, we must address several questions: (A) Is the clause rooted in Scripture? (B) Is it a late addition to the Apostles' Creed and, if so, does its late appearance count against it? (C) How have Christians (and especially Reformed Christians) through the centuries understood the clause? (D) What does the Apostles' Creed mean when it affirms Christ's descent into hell? Answers to questions such as these will help to elucidate the biblical basis, historical standing, meaning, and value of the creed's affirmation that Jesus Christ descended into hell.

A. Does Scripture support the creedal affirmation that Jesus Christ descended into hell (descendit ad inferna or inferos)?

Several New Testament texts can be seen as supporting this teaching:

Acts 2:27, 31. In its account of Peter's Pentecost sermon, the book of Acts records Peter's use of Psalm 16:10: "For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit" (NRSV). According to Acts 2, Peter mentioned this verse twice, first as part of an extended excerpt from Psalm 16 and then by itself (Acts 2:27, 31). In the context, Peter is arguing that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, was raised up and freed from death by God, since it was impossible for him to be held in death's power (Acts 2:22-24). Peter contrasts David, who died and was buried, with Jesus, the Messiah, of whose resurrection David spoke when he said, "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption" (Acts 2:31, NRSV). Although this passage does not directly say that Jesus descended to Hades, it does say that God did not abandon him to Hades but raised him up, thereby suggesting that Jesus occupied Hades from his death to his resurrection.

Ephesians 4:9. In the context of a discussion of Christ's gifts to his people, Ephesians quotes Psalm 68:18 regarding the gifts that followed on Christ's ascension and his defeat of "captivity" (Eph. 4:8). After quoting the psalm, Ephesians adds, "When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:9-10, NRSV). For present purposes, the important point is the reference to Christ's descent into the lower parts of the earth. To what does this refer? Although it is possible that the descent referred to here is Christ's descent to earth, it seems more likely that this descent is Christ's journey to Hades, the realm of the dead.

I Peter 3:18-19; 4:6. In the context of encouraging those who were suffering for doing good, I Peter points out that "Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah" (I Peter 3:18-20a, NRSV). Several verses later, after encouraging believers to live the rest of their earthly lives not by human desires but by the will of God, the epistle adds, "For this is the

reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does" (I Peter 4:6, NRSV). These passages from I Peter raise many difficult issues. If they are connected, as is being done here, they lead to such questions as whether those who disobeyed God during Noah's day (or perhaps even all who had disobeyed God prior to Christ's death) were given an opportunity to hear the gospel proclaimed by the crucified Christ and whether they then had the opportunity to repent. Although this passage, given the difficulties of interpretation it presents, might not be sufficient by itself to establish the doctrine of Christ's descent into Hades, it does lend support to other texts that more clearly suggest the doctrine.

In sum, although there are not a large number of direct biblical references to support the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell, there is sufficient support to establish the doctrine. Given that there is no biblical material that undermines the doctrine, it seems fair to judge that the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell has an adequate biblical basis.

B. Is the affirmation of Christ's descent into hell a late addition to the Apostles' Creed, and, if so, does its late appearance count against it?

Both parts of this question are important: When did this clause appear in the creed and when did it become part of the common teaching that was held by leading theologians of the church? Even if the clause was a relatively late entry into the Apostles' Creed, was it held by only a few writers of the early church?

The clause "he descended into hell" was a relative latecomer to the creedal tradition. It first appeared in Christian creeds after the middle of the fourth century. According to J.N.D. Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds*, the clause may have appeared before A.D. 360 in some Eastern creeds. The first documented appearance of the clause in a creed was in the Fourth Formula of Sirmium (the "Dated Creed" of A.D. 359). In the West the first documented appearance of the clause in a creed was in the Aquileian Creed, which was known to Rufinus (c. A.D. 345 – 410), an Aquileian priest, around A.D. 390. Around A.D. 404, in a comparison of his own church's creed with the Roman Creed (which was the basis for what became known as the Apostles' Creed), Rufinus observed that this clause did not appear in the Roman Creed or in Eastern creeds known to him. The clause appeared in several other creeds during the next three centuries. Although the text of the Apostles' Creed fluctuated for many years, Kelly argues that it had reached a relatively fixed form by the late sixth or early seventh century. Thus, by the seventh century, "he descended into hell" (*descendit ad inferna* or *inferos*) appeared in a majority of Western creedal formulae.

Although it must be admitted that "he descended into hell" entered the creedal tradition relatively late, this admission must be qualified. The fourth century was not an especially late time for creedal development. The first creedal reference to Christ's descent into hell occurred only a few decades after the Council of Nicaea introduced the word *homoousios* into the creedal tradi-tion. The trinitarian formula that God is one essence and three hypostases (a point that Nicaea had denied, by the way) didn't become a conciliar teaching until the synodical letter of the Second Council of Constantinople in 382— around the same time that Christ's descent into hell was included in the

Aquileian Creed. It is also important to remember that the first formal "rules of faith" appeared little more than a century and a half before some creeds began to refer to Christ's descent into hell.

Even if one concedes that "he descended into hell" was a relatively late entry into the Apostles' Creed, what was the status of the doctrine itself in the early church? When did it become part of the common teaching that was held by leading theologians of the church? Although the clause does not appear in second-century rules of faith, it does appear in writings by some of the church's earliest theologians: Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus, Melito of Sardis, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian (all from the second and third centuries). In addition, theologians such as Athanasius and Augustine held to the doctrine of Jesus Christ's descent into hell after his death.

John Calvin offers a helpful perspective on the biblical and historical grounding for this clause. In the 1559 edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he argues that even though the clause "he descended into hell" was not part of the earliest creeds, Christians must confess it. He gives two main reasons for keeping the clause: (1) we know that early Christians held to Christ's descent into hell, since the church fathers, despite having various explanations of the doctrine, all mention it; and (2) like other elements in the Apostles' Creed, this clause has been derived from God's Word.

C. What does "he descended into hell" mean?

In order to come to a proper estimate of the value of the Apostles' Creed's affirmation of Christ's descent into hell, it will be helpful not only to point out that the clause has a biblical and creedal basis but also to explore the meaning of the clause. What becomes apparent upon examination is that Reformed Christians have available at least two or three legitimate and helpful under-standings of this clause.

Already in the sixteenth century there were three distinct understandings of the clause among Reformed theologians: (1) Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger understood Christ's descent as his entering into the presence of departed believers—a descent into Hades. According to this view, Christ's descent into Hades supports the doctrine of the intermediate state by showing that souls continue to exist even after bodily death. (2) Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism offered a second way of interpreting Christ's descent into hell. Already in the 1536 edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin offers a distinctive understanding of Christ's descent into hell: It means that Christ suffered the severity of divine judgment in order to make satisfac-tion to divine justice in our name. Calvin's view is reflected in Question and Answer 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "Q. Why does the creed add, 'He descended to hell'? A. To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell." Unlike Zwingli, Bullinger, and the main tradition of interpretation before him, Calvin sees Christ's descent into hell not as a stage between his death and his resurrection but rather as a way of emphasizing the severity and substitutionary character of Christ's suffering. (3) Theodore Beza offered a third (and, in our opinion, less satisfying) understanding of the clause, arguing that the "descent" referred to Christ's burial.

In the seventeenth century, the *Leiden Synopsis* (1626) identified several permissible Reformed understandings of the clause *descendit ad inferna* or *infernum*. (1) The clause refers to Christ's entire state of humiliation (the position of Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism). (2) If the reader accepts *inferna* or *infernum* as the state of the dead (*sheol* in Hebrew, *hades* in Greek), then Christ descended to the realm of the dead. Supporting this interpretation is the subsequent creedal statement that on the third day Christ rose again from the dead. (3) The descent refers to Christ's three days under the power of death. In this view, this clause adds something to the affirmation that Christ was buried, since burial refers to the body alone, whereas the state of death refers to the separation of body and soul that occurs at death.

D. Summary of possible meanings

What does the Apostles' Creed mean when it affirms Christ's descent into hell? Clearly, the Apostles' Creed does not teach a *physical* descent of Christ into hell. Christ's descent into hell was not a bodily descent. Still, confusion can arise because the English word "hell" can have at least two distinct referents. It can refer either to the world of the spirits of those who have died or to the realm of eternal punishment. Fortunately, any misunderstanding caused by this ambiguity can be removed by observing that Scripture refers to the world of spirits who have died by the terms *sheol* or *hades* and that it refers to the realm of eternal punishment by the term *gehenna*.

Both of these understandings of the term appear in the tradition's various understandings of the Apostles' Creed's reference to Christ's descent into hell. Some understand Christ's descent into hell as a descent into Hades—the realm of the dead; but others understand "hell" to refer to the place of eternal punishment and then interpret the descent figuratively rather than literally. Thus, on the one hand, the early church, understanding the clause as descent into Hades, took the creed to affirm that Christ descended to the place of the dead or the "lower regions" of the earth, not to the place of final punishment. On the other hand, Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism, understanding the clause as referring to the place of eternal punishment, took the Apostles' Creed to affirm that Christ suffered the pangs of eternal punishment on the cross and earlier.

IV. Objections to keeping "he descended into hell" and responses

Given the foregoing, we are now in a position to summarize why we believe the clause "he descended into hell" should not be removed from the Apostles' Creed. What follows are ten of the strongest objections to keeping the clause in the creed and our responses to these objections, based on the preceding biblical and historical study.

Objection 1: There is no biblical warrant for the doctrine of a "descent into hell."

Response: The church throughout its nearly twenty centuries has consistently recognized one or more of the following texts as a biblical basis for the *descensus*—Acts 2:27, 31; Ephesians 4:9; and I Peter 3:18-19 and 4:6.

Objection 2: The biblical references adduced as proof texts do not support the doctrine of the creed.

Response: The texts do not appear to support the article if the article is understood a priori and apart from the churchly context provided by the texts. When, however, the article is read in its proper churchly context of interpretation, it not only is supported by the biblical texts, but it can only be interpreted by means of the traditionally cited texts.

Objection 3: The creedal reference to "hell" indicates the place of final punishment.

Response: The reference to "hell" is a translation of *infernus* or *inferus,* the Greek equivalent of which is *hades,* namely, the resting place of the dead or "lower regions" of the earth, not the place of final punishment. None of the fathers or later commentators understood the creed as indicating a descent of Christ to the place of final punishment. The fact that the creedal article is liable to being misunderstood is, certainly, not an argument for excising it. Rather, it demands careful explanation.

Objection 4: The Apostles' Creed teaches a *physical* descent of Christ into "hell."

Response: As clearly indicated by the fathers of the church and by later commentators from the medieval or Reformation era, the *descensus* has invariably been interpreted as referring to the soul of Christ, given that his body was for three days in the tomb.

Objection 5: The doctrine of the *descensus* conflicts with Jesus' statement to the thief on the cross: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Response: This problem was addressed by the tradition, which clearly distinguished between the physical location of Christ's body in the tomb, the spiritual separation of Christ's soul from his body (specifically with reference to the presence of his soul in the abode of the dead), and the omnipresence of Christ according to his divinity (specifically with reference to his preresurrection presence in "paradise"). Understood in this way, there is no conflict.

Objection 6: Because Christ said, "It is finished," as he died, his work of salvation cannot be conceived as continuing beyond his death.

Response: The reference of Christ's saying is unclear: He may simply be indicating that his physical sufferings on the cross are completed. Even if, moreover, the saying is understood as a reference to Christ's satisfaction for sin, it cannot be taken to mean that the entire work of salvation had been completed, because Christ's victory over death was finalized only in the resurrection. The final resurrection, moreover, signals the conclusion of the "intermediate state" for believers—just as Christ's resurrection signaled the conclusion of the intermediate state for the incarnate Mediator.

Objection 7: The *descensus* is a late addition to the creed, having no solid precedent prior to c. A.D. 650.

Response: Not only does the Creed of Aquileia (c. 390) offer a precise precedent, but also there is a series of creeds produced between A.D. 400 and A.D. 650 that follow this pattern of confession. Moreover, in addition to the warrant for the creedal article in the church's understanding of Acts 2:27-31,

Ephesians 4:9, and I Peter 3:18-19, there is massive precedent for the creedal article in the writings of the fathers from the early second century onward. Furthermore, at least two fathers in whose creeds the article did not appear (Cyril of Jerusalem and Augustine) viewed the doctrine taught by the article as a fundamental element of the apostolic faith.

Objection 8: The sole creedal reference to the *descensus* prior to the Apostles' Creed (the Creed of Aquileia) does not mean what the Apostles' Creed indicates by "descended into hell."
Response: This objection is based solely on the testimony of Rufinus, who clearly did not offer a sound reading of the creedal article at this point in his exposition of the creed—but who subsequently offered the typical patristic interpretation as a descent to the realm of the dead.

Objection 9: The *descensus* is contrary to Reformed theology.
Response: Inasmuch as the *descensus* is taught by Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism as indicating the suffering of Christ's soul and by the Westminster Standards and a series of Reformed theologians of the era of orthodoxy as referring to the intermediate state of Christ's soul, we must either conclude that the theology of the Reformers and of Reformed orthodoxy is contrary to Reformed theology or that the *descensus* occupies a significant place in the traditional Reformed confession. Moreover, these many Reformed theologians assumed the doctrine to be biblical, working to explain how a confession of Christ's descent to the realm of the dead can be taught in the context of a theology that denies both purgatory and the *limbus patrum.*

Objection 10: The answer to the Heidelberg Catechism's question on the meaning of the *descensus* simply fails to answer the question.
Response: The catechism's question asks why the words "descended into hell" follow the creedal confession concerning Christ's death and burial. Its answer says, as Calvin did, that the words have been added in order to give believers assurance that by the fullness of Christ's sufferings in soul (as well as in body), they have been "redeemed from the anguish and torments of hell." Syntactically, the words are a precise answer to the question as posed. Theologically, they offer one of several permissible interpretations of the creedal article.

V. Recommendations

The foregoing material from the study committee was submitted to and approved by the IRC at its meeting in December 1998. Having reviewed the CRC's subscription to and amendment of creeds and confessions, the biblical and historical materials related to the "descent" clause, and the major objections against the clause raised by the Reformed Churches of Australia and others, the IRC was then in a position to respond to the actions taken by the Reformed Churches of Australia in 1997. What follows are (A) four (out of seven) official decisions of the 1997 RCA synod that the IRC felt should be addressed and (B) the IRC's responses to these decisions in the form of six recommendations to Synod 1999 of the CRC:

A. The Reformed Churches of Australia decided in 1997

   2. To add a footnote to the descensus in all future printings of the Apostles' Creed, stating, "By this we understand that Christ suffered the God-forsaken agony of hell on the cross," and that this report and our synodical decisions be forwarded to the REC and the Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship (CEF) with the RCA with the request for study and action with a view to coming to a common agreement for any rewording of the Apostles' and Athanasian creeds.

      Grounds:
      a. The footnote would reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding of what is being confessed.
      b. Any change would then be effected by a community of Reformed churches.

   3. To also send the following to the REC and CEF: "To consider changing from 'was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell' to 'was crucified, dead, and buried, having suffered the pains of hell.'"

      Grounds:
      a. This is true to the Reformed understanding that the pains of hell came before the death and burial of Christ.
      b. It gives creedal support to the oft-denied doctrine of hell.
      c. It fits in with the meter of the original, so that there will be no stumbling if people present follow the old version.

   4. To continue to allow freedom, for those whose consciences are bothered, to remain silent whenever this statement is publicly confessed by the church, as previously declared by Synod 1994.

   5. To declare that it [synod] has upheld the concern of the gravamen by (1) forwarding this report and actions of the synod to the REC and CEF, (2) suggesting the alternative wording "having suffered the pain of hell" to the REC, and (3) adding the footnote to the Apostles' Creed."

      (RCA *Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. I-36-37)

B. *With respect to the RCA's synodical decisions above, the IRC recommends the following:*

1. That synod commend the RCA for submitting its gravamen and synodical decisions to the REC and to churches in ecclesiastical fellowship for reaction and for not unilaterally changing the text of the Apostles' Creed.

2. That synod inform the RCA that the CRC finds no grounds for the original gravamen or for the RCA synod's attempt to uphold "the concern of the gravamen."

   Grounds:
   a. The gravamen and RCA study-committee report are based on an incomplete and inadequate bibliography. Many of the major primary and secondary sources related to this issue were not consulted, and much of the argumentation was based on just a few recent journal articles.
   b. The gravamen fails to recognize that throughout its twenty centuries the Christian church has consistently appealed to several biblical texts as the foundation for the *descensus* doctrine. Patristic, medieval, Reformation, and post-Reformation orthodox theologians debated not *whether*

Scripture teaches Christ's descent into hell but *what Scripture means* by this descent.

c. Not only is this article rooted in Scripture, but there is also widespread recognition of it in the writings of the fathers from the second century onward and in a series of creeds from the fourth through the seventh centuries.

d. The materials submitted by the RCA do not take sufficient account of the fact that in the history of the English language the word "hell" has referred not only to the place of final punishment but also to *sheol* or *hades*, biblical terms for the resting place of the soul in the intermediate state. In fact, it is in this latter sense of hell that a majority of commentators in the past have understood the descent of Christ into "hell."

3. That synod commend the RCA for adding an explanatory footnote to the "descent" clause.

   Grounds:
   a. There is indeed considerable ignorance and misunderstanding of the meaning of this clause among those who confess the Apostles' Creed.
   b. To overcome ignorance and misunderstanding, the CRC, too, has upon occasion added footnotes to the creeds and confessions.

4. That synod advise the RCA to alter its wording of the footnote to read something like this: Throughout history, Christians, including Reformed Christians, have understood this clause in different ways. Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 44 interpret it to mean that Christ suffered the God-forsaken agony of hell, especially on the cross but also earlier.

   Ground: This proposed alteration of the footnote recognizes that there are, even in the Reformed tradition, other reasonable and responsible interpretations of this clause besides that given in Q. and A. 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

5. That synod advise the RCA to retain the traditional wording of the "descent" clause and to withdraw its request that the REC consider changing the wording to "having suffered the pains of hell."

   Grounds:
   a. The materials submitted by the RCA provide no new or compelling evidence for altering the traditional wording of the creed.
   b. There are several biblical passages that lend significant support to the teaching embodied in the clause.
   c. Even if the clause was not in the earliest versions of the Apostles' Creed, it represents the consensus of the church from at least the second century.
   d. Whenever a historical-textual approach to a creed offers satisfactory answers to objections raised against it, the creed should not be modified. In most situations it is a more suitable solution to respect the difficult language of the original and to explain it than to alter a historical text.
   e. The proposed change in wording would limit the possible meanings of this clause to that given by the Heidelberg Catechism, which offers just one of several interpretations found in the Reformed tradition. As confessional Reformed believers we are bound to but not limited to the explanation provided in the Heidelberg Catechism.

f. The clause reflects or implies a number of important Christian teachings: that Christ passed through the intermediate state between his death and resurrection, that redemption's wide scope includes even those who have died, and that Christ made satisfaction for sin and its conse-quences—and did so in our place.

g. Contemporary churches should be very reluctant to alter the creeds because, although these creeds lack the authority of Scripture, they exercise significant authority in the church and provide valuable service in the teaching and preaching ministry of the church.

h. The ecumenical creeds help to hold together a badly fragmented Christian church. Because the Apostles' Creed has ecumenical status in the Western church, the alteration of the "descent" clause by one or more denominations would in effect place them creedally outside the circle of the worldwide church.

6. That synod advise the RCA to consider rescinding its decision to "allow freedom, for those whose consciences are bothered, to remain silent whenever this statement is publicly confessed by the church."

   Grounds:
   a. Being a professing member of a confessional Reformed church requires that one believe and confess "the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testaments, and in the articles of the Christian faith . . . to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation . . ." (Form for Public Profession of Faith).

   b. Conscientious objections should disappear once the biblical, historical, and theological bases for this article of the creed are explained. Good catechetical instruction, catechism preaching, and theological training should help to alleviate misunderstanding of the "descent" clause on the part of those who are called to confess it publicly.

Appendix D

THE REFORMED ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

September 21, 1998

2050 Breton Rd. SE, Ste. 102
Grand Rapids, MI USA 49546
Telephone/Fax: (616) 949-2910
E-mail: rec@recweb.org
Web site: www.recweb.org

To: Member Churches of the REC

Re: REC and Jubilee 2000 campaigns

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A few months ago, I announced in our *News Exchange* that the Interim Committee of the Reformed Ecumenical Council had urged our member churches to "support international efforts to reduce or forgive international debt" and to "support and encourage" the growing number of "Jubilee 2000" campaigns. I now present this resolution to you formally, and I offer some explanation and supporting documents about why the committee made this decision.

The Interim Committee investigated this question for two years. The process began because of a special request of the last Assembly. Delegates asked the Interim Committee to find appropriate ways to express the REC's "sorrow and indignation over the measurable causes of poverty ... caused in part by crushing debts and the demands of repayment to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank...."

We knew from the testimony of our delegates that in many countries the economic situation caused great hardship. Since 1996, this has become worse, particularly in Asia. Because of worries about the details of international finance, the assembly also asked the Interim Committee to consult some experts from our churches and then decide on the most appropriate way to offer our contribution.

When the committee began its investigation, some Christians had already begun a campaign calling for forgiveness of the most damaging debt, So the committee asked economists whether this might be an action our churches could support. The advice we received was contradictory. Some suggested we would encourage dishonesty by suggesting people could go back on their promises to pay. Others claimed that debt forgiveness allows the poor managers and the corrupt leaders to get away with their mistakes and thievery. Others supported forgiveness but said there should be more conditions on any forgiveness. Another said that we should talk about grace in this context rather than Jubilee.

Yet the committee believed that some level of forgiveness of debt is called for in Scripture. As churches, we cannot determine all the details of debt forgiveness. We are not

Agenda for Synod 1999   **Interchurch Relations Committee 219**
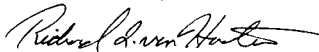
experts. I can say those details come down to two hotly-debated questions: What debt is **eligible** for forgiveness? and What will be the **conditions** for forgiveness? Nevertheless, we can draw attention to the plight of those who suffer, and we can put pressure on those politicians and economists who are responsible to take steps to alleviate that suffering.

Our support of Jubilee 2000 campaigns is qualified. Those campaigns vary from nation to nation, and we will not agree with all that a particular campaign says and does. Nevertheless, the Interim Committee is asking that you make your voice be heard, if that is possible for you. We know there are many places with such campaigns. If there is none in your country, use other means that may be available to you to let your support be known. Our resolution asks your church to appeal to your government to work toward relieving some of the crushing burdens that are borne by our brothers and sisters in some of our member churches.

I enclose the official resolution of the Interim Committee. I have also added a few supporting documents, some explaining the situation that the REC is addressing, and one offering a theological exploration of Sabbath and Jubilee.

May God strengthen our hearts and our hands so that we may be instruments of His justice.

Yours in Christ,

Richard L. van Houten
General Secretary

Resolution of the Interim Committee of the Reformed
Ecumenical Council
June 23, 1998

A. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to support international efforts to reduce or forgive international debt for highly indebted poor countries of the world. Specifically, in countries where "Jubilee 2000" campaigns are being developed, our members should support and encourage those campaigns.

B. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches in affluent countries to appeal to their governments for forgiveness of loans, and that in future cases where development loans are made, greater transparency and mutual accountability are included.

C. The Reformed Ecumenical Council believes that in addition to debt forgiveness to ease the payment burdens, the international economic community should work toward fairer trade agreements and wider base for international currency exchange.

D. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to encourage their governments to work towards internationally accepted standards for "national bankruptcy." This will provide insight into the extent of the burden that international debt imposes on a country, and will create guidelines about how much debt a country can bear.

E. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to ask their governments to re-examine the conditions that accompany international loans and loan renegotiation, which are imposed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris Club of Creditor Nations. These conditions, known popularly as "Structural Adjustment Programs," should be evaluated especially for their impact on the health and education programs of the highly indebted countries. The council stands firmly on the side of the poor, and believes that the prosperous countries must be willing to bear some of the consequences of poor loan decisions since 1973. The high interest rates of the 1980s, which rebuilt the economies of the wealthy countries, have been a cause of the inability of poorer countries to repay loans negotiated with floating interest rates.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee

I. Brief overview

In 1998 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee published three booklets of nine sermons each for its 155 regular subscribers. A number of vacant churches also used its services for obtaining a one-time supply of sermons.

The committee is in the process of studying the feasibility of making sermons available via electronic means.

Due to increased printing and mailing costs, the committee had no choice but to increase the subscription rates for 1999. The new rates are $90.00 (Can.) or $65.00 (U.S.) for a year's subscription. A limited number of back copies are available from the secretary at half price.

The committee consists of Rev. Harry Vander Windt (2000), chairman; Rev. Paul Stadt (1999); Rev. Carel Geleynse (1999); Rev. Hendrik Bruinsma (2001), alternate; and Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg (1999), secretary-treasurer.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 2000 to provide sermons for reading services.

B. That synod encourage churches and ministers to subscribe to this service for the benefit of churches and individuals.

C. That synod reappoint Rev. Paul Stadt (Chatham, Ontario), who is eligible for another three-year term.

D. That synod reappoint Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg as secretary-treasurer for a period of one year. Mr. Vander Ploeg, a retired Christian-school principal from Woodstock, Ontario, has already served the committee for two full terms (a total of six years) and is not eligible for another term. The addition of another year to Mr. Vander Ploeg's term would eliminate the problem that presently exists of three members out of five leaving the committee in the same year.

E. That synod elect one regular committee member from the following nominations to fill the vacancy of Rev. Carel Geleynse, who is not eligible for reelection:

Rev. Kenneth Benjamins, pastor of Wyoming, Ontario, Christian Reformed Church.

Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church of Drayton, Ontario.

> Sermons for Reading Services Committee
> Hendrik Bruinsma, alternate
> Carel Geleynse
> Paul D. Stadt
> Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary-treasurer
> Harry A. Vander Windt, chairman

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

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The Dordt College community has had much for which to give thanks in 1998-1999. Continued enrollment growth, advancements in programs and facilities, the addition of committed Reformed scholars to the faculty, and excellent constituent support all contributed to a spirit of gratitude throughout the campus community.

I. Record enrollment

Dordt's fall enrollment total of 1,420 superseded last year's record of 1,301; the 119-student increase was the largest single-year increase in Dordt's forty-three-year history. Growth was balanced geographically: Increased enrollment from nearby high schools accounted for some of the record freshman-class size, but Canadian enrollment in the freshman class also climbed by approximately 20 percent. Dordt continues to draw students from diverse areas; over 50 percent come from more than five hundred miles away.

Dordt also continues to provide biblically based higher education to large numbers of CRC students, a record 1,024 in 1998-1999. At the same time, Dordt provides an environment where CRC students can interact with students from a wide variety of other denominational traditions, including eight other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations in addition to a score of other evangelical and nondenominational churches.

II. Campus life

Enrollment growth has required the construction of a new residence hall, which opened in time for the fall semester. Housing 240 sophomores and juniors, Covenant Hall features large individual rooms, each accommodating two students, and a variety of public areas designed to contribute to the close-knit community atmosphere that is a distinctive feature of Dordt College.

Also contributing to community building at Dordt are a number of vital and growing student-life programs. Student-organized worship activities continue to be well attended, with hundreds of students attending Wednesday Praise and Worship and biweekly Sunday-night gatherings called GIFT (Growing in Faith Together). Close to two hundred students joined PLIA (Putting Love Into Action) spring-break volunteer service trips, and two teams of twenty students each spent the break between semesters doing volunteer service in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua.

III. Academics

Five new professors joined the Dordt College faculty for the 1998-1999 year, three with regular appointments and two as replacements for faculty members on leave. The three regular appointees are assistant professor of economics Jude Fernando, a native of Sri Lanka and a Ph.D. graduate of the University of Pennsylvania; Christopher Rehn, assistant professor of business administration, who earned a J.D. from Cornell University Law School and an M.B.A. from Eastern College; and Keith Sewell of Victoria, Australia, who holds a Ph.D. in the philosophy of history from Deakin University.

Among a number of developments in the academic program is a new major in youth ministries, which responds to a growing need in Christian Reformed

and other supporting churches that are increasingly establishing youth-ministry programs but are facing a shortage of trained personnel. The Environmental Studies Department, created last year, continued this year to develop its interdisciplinary major with the appointment of members of the Biology Department and Political Science Department to joint positions in environmental studies.

IV. Financial support

We were blessed with generous financial support in the past year. We are anticipating the successful completion by the end of the year of the Dordt 2000 Campaign, which so far has raised over $17 million for endowment, the annual operational budget, and campus facilities such as the recreation center, completed in 1997. Though both our Annual Drive and Spring Debt Reduction Drive recorded increases over the previous year, reflecting growth in individual giving, church gift support was down by 3 percent. While we are grateful for the blessing of support from many members of Christian Reformed churches, we hope and pray that Christian Reformed councils and congregations will continue to recognize that the colleges affiliated with the CRC contribute greatly to the task of training its members for the kingdom work to which God calls us.

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Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

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Institute for Christian Studies

Amid the normal graduate-school activity, the Institute for Christian Studies is continuing the process of mapping our institutional course. We do this partially in the light of our May decision not to pursue a merger with The King's University College in Edmonton. Many new opportunities await ICS, and we are keen to fulfill our mission in Christian graduate education, energized by the strengths of the faculty, staff, and students.

ICS remains committed to the task of providing quality Christian graduate education for full- and part-time students at the master's and doctoral level. We continue to explore creative teaching strategies like the three-week January 1998 Interim course, run with the participation of a Calvin College professor and Calvin students, and the summer-session courses run in cooperation with Wycliffe College, part of the University of Toronto.

I. New directions for ICS

A. Distance education

During 1998, ICS developed a new direction in graduate education for Christian-school teachers and leaders. Our new half-time ICS education professor, Doug Blomberg, is from the National Institute for Christian Education (NICE) in Australia. ICS and NICE have reached an agreement under which ICS will offer adapted NICE courses to Christian educators across Canada and the United States via distance-education methods. We are excited about the potential these courses have to serve a wide community.

B. Document delivery service

ICS is in the process of developing a service that will help make Reformed Christian research material, including what is at ICS, available to scholars around the world (via the Internet and mail-delivery service). Scholars in South America, for example, may want to develop Reformed scholarship but have no access to research material. With the support of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE), ICS will give them and scholars from around the globe access to our unique Reformed research resources.

C. Christian-scholarship project

Faculty members at ICS are committed to spending part of their research time on a joint project focused on the idea of Christian scholarship. Upcoming publications and conferences will be part of this project. Faculty began the process by writing their own educational autobiographies, which have become a key orientation for the project.

II. New faculty

Two new senior members (professors) joined the Institute in January 1999. Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin is the new professor of aesthetics (position formerly held by Calvin Seerveld). Jonathan Chaplin is the new professor of political theory (position formerly held by Paul Marshall). Their arrival has been much anticipated. The ICS faculty continues to grow in academic strength and diversity.

III. CRC support for Christian graduate education

In June of 1998, following some intensive strategic-planning sessions for the future of ICS, I wrote a piece in our newsletter, *Perspective*, which outlined several possible orientation points for ICS. In the article I wrote, "The Preamble of the Institute's *Educational Creed* begins with the words, 'In humble awareness of our dependence upon the Triune God. . . .' That is where ICS began, and that is where we stand today. Even as we formulate strategic plans, our future is in the hand of God." In order to sustain our mission, we are grateful to the many CRC churches that continue to uphold ICS through prayer and financial support. Thank you.

Institute for Christian Studies
Harry Fernhout, president

The King's University College

The King's University College has had a good year with enrollment increasing slowly to somewhat over five hundred students. The trend of attracting students from farther away is continuing. Increasing numbers of students have enrolled from across Canada, from the U.S., and from overseas. King's is becoming better known in ever-widening circles as an academically excellent university college where students are exposed to a Christian perspective on life and the world.

The college began a process of strategic planning last fall which is to be completed by late spring. The planning process involves the participation of many members of the faculty, administrative staff, students, board members, and senate members. It is designed to develop goals and strategies for our institution over the next five years. A number of planning groups are working in the areas of institutional program development, service and outreach in the community, student services and campus life, recruitment of students, financial development, and the fostering of institutional unity in light of our mission. It is an exciting project, and we hope it will provide us with a road map for our development as an institution as we move into the twenty-first century and the third decade of our existence.

Our recently completed curriculum-review process identified the need for a stronger interdisciplinary learning experience for students. As a result, King's is introducing a new interdisciplinary component in its curriculum. All students will be required to register for two three-day interdisciplinary conferences per year, which will take place in the middle of each semester. Each conference will be focused on a particular theme (for example, social justice or the role of technology in our lives) and will stress foundational issues and Christian perspectives associated with the theme. These conferences will provide our students with a common experience that gives them deepened insight into what it means to be a Christian in our complex world.

The college continues to develop its programs. New four-year programs in computing science and business have been designed and are currently being evaluated for accreditation and funding purposes. A new four-year program in psychology was recently launched.

We much appreciate the support The King's University College receives in the form of ministry shares from CRC congregations. These funds allow us to keep tuition reasonable and thus indirectly to support the hundreds of students from these congregations who attend King's. We are grateful to be able to serve the denomination in the vitally important area of Christian higher education.

The King's University College
Henk Van Andel, president

Redeemer College

Prayers have been answered at Redeemer College. After a long and often challenging process, Redeemer College has been given full recognition as an independent Christian undergraduate university with the authority to grant bachelor of arts (B.A.) and bachelor of science (B.Sc.) degrees. This recognition indicates the Ontario government's acknowledgment that the education offered at Redeemer College (an education which professes the lordship of Christ in all areas of study) meets Ontario university standards. This decision will give our graduates the recognition they deserve, and it promises to open up a new phase in the development of Redeemer College. It is our prayer that this action also signals a change of heart on the part of government officials, a change that will have a positive impact on Christian education in this province at the elementary and secondary levels.

Redeemer currently has an enrollment of 513 students (473 FTE), representing thirty denominations and fourteen countries; over two-thirds of our students come from a Reformed Christian background. The spiritual vitality of our students testifies to their unity in Christ and is evident in chapel services, mission and service projects, and prayer groups.

To keep up with the changing environment in which we live and the new growth that Redeemer is likely to enjoy, as well as to ensure the development of the institution into the next millennium, we have undertaken several initiatives. The recent strategic-planning process led to the introduction of improved library and technological services and the investigation of possible areas of program development. The Building on the Promise capital campaign has been launched to support these initiatives as well as to reduce the capital debt, to fund faculty research and professional development, and to support student scholarships and financial aid.

We cannot mention our student financial aid without acknowledging the generous and faithful support of the churches. Last year's ministry shares of $520,000 from the churches helped make a Christian university education at Redeemer College affordable for many students. On behalf of these students we thank our contributing churches and synod for placing Redeemer on the list of recommended causes.

Along with providing a quality Christian university education for our students, Redeemer College also maintains a strong commitment to serving the Christian community and to exploring the riches of God's creation through research. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the internationally recognized Pascal Centre for Advanced Studies in Faith and Science, and in July we will be hosting the hermeneutics conference "Christian Scholarship in the Light of Scripture." Through these and many other avenues of outreach by students, faculty, and staff, Redeemer College seeks to witness to Christ's lordship in this province, across Canada, and beyond.

Redeemer College is pleased to host Synod 1999, and we look forward to the Lord's blessings upon the meetings of synod and upon the college as we move with confidence into the future.

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Redeemer College
Justin D. Cooper, president

</div>

I. Introduction

God's Word, prayer, the needs of the church, the needs of society, equipping those who are called to kingdom service—these five points encapsulate the focus of Reformed Bible College. We are thrilled and energized by the foundation and direction the Scriptures give to our students as they pursue their areas of calling. (All bachelor-degree students still complete a Bible major at RBC *along with* their specialty-area major.) This report is not so much an account of what the college is doing as it is a reflection of what we see God doing through our people, efforts, and institution. Take this as a word of witness to the movement of his Spirit and the blessing of the Father.

II. Increasing enrollment

We have seen a 43 percent growth in the student body over the past two years. What encourages all of us is that students are coming to RBC out of the same motivation: They have a deep sense of God's calling to some form of ministry. God is calling more people into full-time kingdom work, and we believe that he is doing so because he knows the future and he knows these people will be needed witnesses for him.

III. Affirming RBC's ministry-directed emphasis

The college has really come together to affirm RBC's "Bible-based, Christ-centered, ministry-directed" education. RBC is not a liberal-arts college; it is a college that trains people for direct entry into ministry. Churches and institutions we serve have reflected back to us the growing need in their contexts for spiritually aware graduates whose knowledge of the Bible is evident in their professional practice. Seminaries have also affirmed with appreciation the emphasis RBC has maintained on students' knowledge of the Word, dedication to Christ, and clear sense of calling and purpose.

IV. Additional programs toward ministry

Various service agencies, churches, and ministry programs have initiated arrangements with RBC or have responded to RBC's initiatives to provide more graduates to fill ministry-related positions. It is significant to us that RBC is not manufacturing new programs in the hope of filling them and enhancing enrollment; rather, it is trying to be actively obedient to the Lord by helping to provide trained workers where they are needed. Programs in youth work, evangelism, cross-cultural missions, social work, and urban ministry continue to grow in scope and depth.

V. Increasing enthusiasm for RBC's mission

One of the greatest blessings we have experienced recently at RBC is an increasing enthusiasm for RBC's mission. There is an awareness of being the right kind of institution, at the right time, at the right place, doing the right things. This assurance comes only from the Lord. Indeed, we are thrilled and energized *and humbled* that we can be part of his exciting kingdom work as it moves into the twenty-first century. Our thanks and appreciation to the Christian Reformed Church for its love, support, encouragement, and prayers.

Reformed Bible College
Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Trinity Christian College

In 1999 Trinity Christian College marks forty years of service in Christian higher education. In a gala anniversary celebration at Chicago's Orchestra Hall in April the entire Trinity community will come together for a service of praise and thanksgiving to God for his continued blessing on the campus community. Through the generous support of God's people in the Christian Reformed Church, we have experienced growth in students, in programs, in facilities, and in the quality of education offered at Trinity. We are grateful for synod's continued recognition of Trinity's contributions to the life and development of the broader Reformed community.

The mission of Trinity is to graduate students who combine excellence in academic preparation with a commitment to practice in their personal and professional lives Christ-like service toward others. In the current academic year there are 630 students, 94 percent of them studying full-time and nearly two-thirds of them residing on campus. Just over 62 percent come from families that are members of traditionally Reformed churches, 46 percent of our full-time students coming from CRC families. The largest major program is education, followed by business and nursing.

The awesome event of the past year was a generous gift that completed the fund-raising effort to cover the cost of building a new chapel/performing-arts center. Ground will be broken on April 26 for this $6 million facility that will seat 1,200 people and provide expanded space for music instruction, the chaplain's program, and many related activities. A companion structure will be a new science and technology building, for which fund-raising is underway. The total cost of these two new buildings, including endowment for continuing operations, is $14 million.

New programs begun in 1998-1999 include an honors program, received with great appreciation by students and faculty members. The recently funded Founders Scholars program is providing significant financial assistance to academically talented students, who will benefit from unique honors programming that brings a welcome ambience of academic excellence to the campus. The recently approved special-education program is also off to a promising start.

The degree-completion program for working adults (the Trinity Adult-education Completion Studies Program—TRACS) enrolled its first class in organizational leadership in January 1999; this program shows the potential of expanding also into areas such as nursing, information systems, and education. The Semester In Spain program, a fixture at Trinity for the past twenty years, received a new focus under new leadership this year, which resulted in expanding enrollments, particularly of students from small Christian colleges like Trinity.

Thanks to the generosity of a faithful donor, the Cooper Career Center opened in 1998, serving the vocational-counseling needs of students by providing career counseling, internship placement, and networking with alumni, with the goal of helping students find the match of talents and vocations that best serves their needs. The center also serves alumni. Research finds that the process of finding one's place can be one of the most difficult

struggles for individuals today. Trinity is fortunate to have this facility available to students and alumni who are making important vocational decisions.

Keeping higher education affordable both now and in the future is a key concern for Trinity and especially for families that envision their children attending an excellent Christian college in the Reformed tradition. Therefore, our fiscal stewardship must include strategies that provide increased assistance directly to families with financial need. As we work to build our campus facilities, we are also placing increased emphasis on raising dollars for endowed scholarships and faculty positions. Trinity's capability to provide quality education at a reasonable price is related to its ability to reduce indebtedness, increase endowment, promote steady yet controlled growth in student population, and partner with friends to provide gifts in support of Trinity's valuable mission.

The involvement of churches is essential to provide the faculty, facilities, programs, and services necessary to equip our students for lives of meaningful service. During our last fiscal year churches gave $179,700 in unrestricted gifts, nearly 16 percent of total annual unrestricted giving. We ask synod to recommend that area classes continue to support the work of Trinity Christian College.

With grateful hearts the board of trustees, administration, and faculty thank God and his people for the wonderful blessings of the past year. Through the continued prayers, encouragement, and financial support of believers, Trinity will be able to continue training young people for leadership in the church and in their chosen professions. The challenge of providing such leadership in our churches, schools, and communities has never been more urgent.

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Trinity Christian College
A.J. Anglin, president
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STUDY COMMITTEES

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I. Mandate and grounds

The Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members was appointed by Synod 1996, which approved the following mandate and grounds:

> That synod appoint a study committee to give direction about and for pastoral care of homosexual members in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1973 (*Acts of Synod 1973*, Report 42).
>
> *Grounds:*
> 1. Since the recommendations of Report 42 are now a generation old, it is time to review how effectively they encourage the churches in providing ministry to their homosexual members.
> 2. Christian homosexuals are beginning to turn away from their isolation, despair, and practice (homosexualism) and are beginning to turn to the church for a sense of community. Many ministries to homosexuals have developed in the years since the 1973 report on homosexuality was written. The churches of our denomination would be well served by a study to evaluate these ministries and give direction to our churches on the subject of homosexuality.
> 3. This study could help us to understand to what degree the pastoral recommendations of Report 42 of Synod 1973 have been effectively carried out and to uncover reasons why this may or may not be so.
> 4. This issue is too big for any of our churches or classes to deal with individually. Several classes and congregations have conducted such studies (e.g., Classes Alberta North, Grand Rapids East, and Toronto and the council of First CRC, London, Ontario). But these local studies have not exhaustively studied all the available ministry possibilities.
>
> <div align="right">(Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 572-73)</div>

II. Membership and experience of committee

The study committee as originally constituted consisted of nine members from diverse occupational backgrounds, including ministry and pastoral care, medicine, education, psychology, and theology. Well over one hundred years of professional experience was represented on the committee, and within that pool of experience most members had some experience and many committee members had considerable experience with homosexual persons and issues. Three members had participated on classical committees to study the issue of homosexuality and the church, one member was a parent to and experienced the death of a gay son, and many members have been in positions of knowing gay and lesbian individuals through personal relationships and counseling or treatment situations.

III. The process of the committee

Once established, the committee determined that its initial approach should be one of listening, information gathering, study, and deliberation. Thus, much early committee time was spent asking questions of and listening to individuals and couples with whom the committee had asked to meet or who had asked to meet with the committee. Those met were from diverse locations in the United States and Canada, the majority being members of the Christian Reformed Church.

When meeting with guests, the committee was particularly interested in hearing about the guests' experiences with the church, including in what ways the church had ministered to them and in what ways they thought the church had failed them. Though the guests had many occasions to develop and follow their own agendas, the committee attempted to focus discussion upon the following questions:

A. In what ways has the church ministered to you to encourage you, sustain your faith, and nurture you in your Christian life?

B. Who have been the most help to you in dealing with your homosexuality, the church (that is, other Christians) or others?

C. What have you looked for from the church and not received?

D. In your judgment what changes must occur for the church to become more effective as God's agent of redemption for homosexual persons?

E. Is there anything else you want to tell us that you think will be helpful for us in giving guidance to the church regarding her ministry?

Many hours were spent listening to and interacting with many spiritually devout, dedicated church members who expressed much gratitude for what God has done in their lives. They described not only their pain, loneliness, and isolation as gay church members but also their hope that the church can become more of a place where they feel they can belong and openly participate.

IV. Information from churches/pastors

A. Introduction

In January 1997 the committee sent the following survey questionnaire to all Christian Reformed pastors both in parish ministries and in specialized ministries:

1. How would you rate your knowledge of the report on homosexuality presented to Synod 1973?

    ____ I know the report very well.
    ____ I know only a little about the report.
    ____ I know only that a distinction is made between "homosexuality" and "homosexualism."
    ____ I know almost nothing about the report.
    ____ Other

2. Do you think many members of your congregation know about the report?

    ____ Many/A few know it well.
    ____ Many/A few don't even know it exists.
    ____ Some/Most know the CRC's position but not the report itself.
    ____ Other

3. Have the pastoral recommendations which Synod 1973 adopted from that report been effectively carried out in your congregation?

    ____ Yes
    ____ No

4. If your answer to 3 is No, would you please tell us what factors have prevented you or the council from implementing the recommendations.

5. If your answer to 3 is Yes, would you please tell us what means have been used and what program(s) has worked. For example:
   a. Have you developed any educational materials for your congregation regarding ministry to homosexual members?
   b. Have you or a staff person designed a ministry for homosexual members which has worked or is working effectively?
   c. Have you or a staff person designed a ministry for homosexual members which did not work effectively?

PLEASE SEND US AS MUCH INFORMATION AND MATERIAL AS YOU CAN WHICH WILL HELP US DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE MINISTRY PLAN.

This survey was not intended to be highly scientific, but it was hoped that it would be useful for obtaining some basic information about pastors' and churches' awareness of the issues involved, including an awareness of the synodical report of 1973. Furthermore, we hoped to discover what various churches were doing in ministry with homosexual members.

Subsequent to the original mailing of the survey to ministers in congregations and specialized ministries, a Korean translation of the survey was sent to Korean pastors and churches in the CRC. Additionally, representatives from the committee met in February 1998 with the multicultural directors of CRC Home Missions. This group represented the Chinese, Korean, Native American/Navajo, and African American communities within the CRC.

B. Responses to inquiries

Of approximately 950 questionnaires mailed to ministers, 501 were returned, for a response rate of 53 percent, an excellent return for this type of survey. The later mailing of 62 questionnaires to Korean pastors and churches yielded 26 responses, a return rate of 41 percent. Four additional surveys were conducted with the multicultural directors of Home Missions. Overall, 1016 questionnaires were distributed, and 531 were returned, a response rate of 52.3 percent.

C. Clergy knowledge of the 1973 synodical report

Of those clergy responding to the survey, a large majority indicated that they know of the 1973 report, and many (395, or 74 percent) said that they know the report well or very well. A significant minority of ministers (131, or 25 percent), however, indicated that they know only that the report made a distinction between homosexuality and homosexualism or know almost nothing about the report. It appears that most CRC pastors are quite familiar with the 1973 report but that a significant minority may need education about it.

It also appears that included in the group which needs to become aware of and educated about the report are pastors from some ethnic-minority groups and others who may have joined the denomination after the 1973 report was published in the *Acts of Synod*, the only place where it can be found.

D. Multicultural directors' responses

When the committee met with the multicultural directors of Home Missions, it was particularly interested in their responses to the following three questions:

1. What is the dominant attitude in the churches of your ethnic group toward persons who are homosexual?

2. How do your churches respond to people when they know or suspect their homosexual orientation?

3. What kind of ministry would or do your churches extend to them?

There is some recognition of homosexuality and knowledge of the 1973 report in most of the ethnic-minority churches of the CRC. The dominant attitude of these churches resembles that of the other churches—generally, that homosexual behavior is sinful and wrong. There appear to be variations in the degree to which various ethnic minorities might embrace members who are known to have same-sex attractions. Specific ministries to individuals with same-sex attractions do not appear to exist in the ethnic-minority churches of the CRC. However, some groups tend to accept known gay and lesbian individuals more readily within their community than others do. Similarly, there appears to be some variation among ethnic-minority church groups in the degree to which issues of and individuals with same-sex attractions are discussed openly. For example, some Chinese churches are quite familiar with the 1973 report and have held study groups using it, whereas some other ethnic-minority churches regard homosexuality as taboo and the issue as unmentionable.

E. Congregational knowledge of the 1973 report

Because of the structure of the questionnaire, it is difficult to derive a clear picture of congregational knowledge of the report. The questionnaire called for the opinion of the pastor regarding the congregation and did not request quantifiable data. A review of survey responses seems to suggest that pastors believe their congregations to be largely unaware of the 1973 report because it is available only in the *Acts of Synod 1973*, and the sense of this committee is that very few congregation members have actually seen the report. Responses to the survey also suggest that, if people are aware of the report, they have only a cursory knowledge of the specifics of the report. Those who have some knowledge of the report appear familiar with the distinction which the report makes between a state of being and a behavior, but they have no knowledge of, for example, how the report goes beyond that distinction to discuss the responsibilities of the church to its homosexual members.

F. Effectiveness in carrying out the guidelines of 1973

A variety of pastoral guidelines were presented in the 1973 report, and because of this variety it appears to have been difficult for pastors to know just how effective they have been in carrying out the guidelines. Or perhaps the definition of effectiveness may differ from individual to individual. Of the questionnaires returned by those pastors who serve in churches, 17.5 percent responded that the guidelines had been effectively carried out in their congregations, 65.3 percent replied that they were not effectively carried out in their

congregations, and 17.1 percent expressed uncertainty or a mixed response to the question.

Some respondents who answered affirmatively to the question of whether the 1973 guidelines had been effectively carried out indicated ways that they had attempted to implement the guidelines, usually through education, counseling, preaching, or programs. For some the education involved church councils, for others it involved the adults of the congregation, and for still others the youth groups of the church were involved. Several pastors indicated they had been involved in counseling gay and lesbian individuals. Many pastors claimed to have mentioned homosexuality in a sermon, and some reported that they had preached sermons on the topic. Others indicated they had addressed the issue of the God-glorifying use of sexuality and that rather than simply condemning one way of dishonoring God, they had focused on a more positive and biblical perspective on sexuality. Finally, several pastors mentioned that members of their congregations had been involved in ministering to individuals with AIDS, and a few indicated that their churches had established a specific ministry to persons who are homosexual. Several of those respondents who said that the guidelines had been effectively carried out did not indicate how that had occurred in their ministry or in the churches which they serve.

Responses indicating that the 1973 guidelines have not been effectively carried out in congregations were by far the most numerous. Respondents gave the following as some main reasons for the lack of effectiveness in implementing the pastoral guidelines of the 1973 report (number of responses in parentheses; some respondents gave more than one reason):

1. Lack of need (242)
2. Fear of the topic (88)
3. Feelings of inadequacy for the task (63)
4. Lack of perceived need (30)
5. Disagreement with the 1973 report (18)

A smattering of other reasons were given less frequently:

6. Hasn't been a priority
7. Overwhelmed with too many other issues
8. General insensitivity
9. Lack of familiarity with what the recommendations are
10. Avoidance
11. Not planned
12. Apathy
13. Hesitancy of people facing the issue in their own lives
14. Haven't studied it
15. The climate is not hospitable to public acknowledgment, let alone discussion.
16. General skepticism with regard to CRC synodical reports
17. Do not like to focus or magnify any one sin
18. Until the issue is personalized with real people we know, the topic is likely to create more division than healing.

It is noteworthy that 77 percent of respondents in this category indicated lack of need as a reason why the guidelines had not been effectively imple-

mented, though it is also important to add that a number of pastors added the word *perceived* to the phrase "lack of need." It may be that needs in fact exist but that pastors are unaware of the needs of gays and lesbians in their congregations or even of the presence of gays and lesbians.

For the 17.1 percent of respondents who expressed uncertainty or ambivalence about their response to Item 3 (Have the pastoral recommendations which Synod 1973 adopted from that report [*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 50-53] been effectively carried out in your congregation?), a number of reasons were given. Some ministers had been in their congregations for only a short time. Others indicated that they had addressed homosexuality in a sermon or classroom setting but had not met with any homosexuals and did not know of any gay or lesbian persons in the congregation and so were confused as to whether or not they had effectively carried out the pastoral guidelines. Though most pastors acknowledge that there may be homosexuals in their congregations, some had not studied the matter further or held discussions with the congregation or the council because they did not feel an immediate need, some cited pressing needs in other areas, and several mentioned that silence on the issue was the preference of their congregation. A few mentioned that the congregations which they serve have members who are generally believed to be homosexual but had adopted a "don't ask/don't tell" policy. Finally, some pastors mentioned that they had not developed specific ministries for homosexual persons because they felt this would be singling out one particular area of need. One pastor wrote, "We developed no specific ministry to homosexual members nor to the divorced, abused, depressed, etc."

Survey results paint a picture of lack of awareness, denial, and systematic neglect of homosexual members by pastors, councils, and congregations, with only a few exceptions, and suggest that, though a majority of ministers feel at least fairly knowledgeable about the 1973 report, they do not believe that their parishioners have much familiarity with the report. It appears that most people in the CRC have only a cursory knowledge of the details of the report and that even those who believe they are quite familiar with the position of the CRC have not been familiar with the pastoral recommendations for ministry and the responsibility of the churches to homosexual members.

Though some ministers felt that the pastoral recommendations of the 1973 report had been effectively carried out in their congregations, the overwhelming majority were of the opinion that they had not been effectively carried out and gave various reasons for that lack of effectiveness. Such factors as perceived lack of need, fear, social attitudes, feelings of inadequacy for the task, and lack of prioritization of the needs of this group seem to have produced a general stance of avoidance, a denial of needs, and an overall atmosphere of silence. These have rendered ministry to homosexual members largely nonexistent and, at best, ineffective for the most part. Clearly, survey results indicate that the church as a whole has not adequately responded to the needs of its gay and lesbian members.

V. A summary of 1973 through 1998

In 1973 the Christian Reformed Church committed itself to a vigorous pastoral agenda toward gay and lesbian persons. In light of the gay and lesbian assignments required by the report—change or celibacy—the Christian Reformed Church promised the kind of pastoral care and gracious fellowship

that would help homosexual persons pursue those assignments with strong and deliberate support. The pastoral guidelines to which synod committed its pastors are these:

a. Homosexuality (male and female) is a condition of disordered sexuality which reflects the brokenness of our sinful world and for which the homosexual may himself bear only a minimal responsibility. —*Adopted*

b. The homosexual may not, on the sole ground of his sexual disorder be denied community acceptance, and if he is a Christian he is to be wholeheartedly received by the church as a person for whom Christ died. —*Adopted*

c. Homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. —*Adopted*

d. The church must exercise the same patient understanding of and compassion for the homosexual in his sins as for all other sinners. The gospel of God's grace in Christ is to be proclaimed to him as the basis of his forgiveness, the power of his renewal, and the source of his strength to lead a sanctified life. As all Christians in their weaknesses, the homosexual must be admonished and encouraged not to allow himself to be defeated by lapses in chastity, but rather, to repent and thereafter to depend in fervent prayer upon the means of grace for power to withstand temptation. —*Adopted*

e. In order to live a life of chastity in obedience to God's will the homosexual needs the loving support and encouragement of the church. The church should therefore so include him in its fellowship that he is not tempted by rejection and loneliness to seek companionship in a "gay world" whose godless lifestyle is alien to a Christian. —*Adopted*

f. Homosexuals, especially in their earlier years, should be encouraged to seek such help as may effect their sexual reorientation and the church should do everything in its power to help the homosexual overcome his disorder. Members of the churches should understand that many homosexuals, who might otherwise seek therapeutic aid, are deterred from doing so by the fear of detection and consequent ostracism. Christian acceptance and support can in all such cases be a means toward healing and wholeness. On the other hand, to those who are not healed and who must accept the limitations of their homosexuality, the church must minister in the same spirit as when it ministers to all who are not married. —*Adopted*

g. Christians who are homosexual in their orientation are like all Christians called to discipleship and to the employment of their gifts in the cause of the kingdom. They should recognize that their sexuality is subordinate to their obligation to live in wholehearted surrender to Christ.

   By the same token, churches should recognize that their homosexual members are fellow-servants of Christ who are to be given opportunity to render within the offices and structures of the congregation the same service that is expected from heterosexuals. The homosexual member must not be supposed to have less the gift of self-control in the face of sexual temptation than does the heterosexual. The relationship of love and trust within the congregation should be such that in instances where a member's sexual propensity does create a problem, the problem can be dealt with in the same way as are problems caused by the limitations and disorders of any other member. —*Adopted*

h. It is the duty of pastors to be informed about the condition of homosexuality and the particular problems of the homosexual in order that the pastor may minister to this need and to the need of others, such as parents, who may be intimately involved in the problems of homosexuality. The pastor is also in a position to instruct his congregation in appropriate ways about homosexuality and to alert members and office holders to the responsibility they bear toward homosexuals in the fellowship. He can encourage an understanding of and compassion for persons who live with this sexual disorder, and dispel the prejudices under which they suffer. —*Adopted*

i. The church should promote good marriages, and healthy family life in which the relations between husband and wife and between parents and children

are such that the psychological causes that may contribute to sexual inversion are reduced to a minimum. Parents should be encouraged to seek Christian counsel and help when they see signs of disordered sexual maturation in their children. —*Adopted*

j. Institutions and agencies associated with the church that are in a position to contribute to the alleviation of the problem of homosexuality are encouraged to do so by assisting ministers to become better informed, by offering counseling services to the homosexual and his family, and by generally creating a Christian attitude in the churches as well as in society as a whole. —*Adopted*

k. The church should speak the Word of God prophetically to a society and culture which glorifies sexuality and sexual gratification. It should foster a wholesome appreciation of sex and expose and condemn the idolatrous sexualism and the current celebration of homosexualism promoted in literature, the theater, films, television, advertisements and the like.

—*Adopted*
(*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 51-53)

These guidelines speak of

– the whole-hearted embrace of the church
– patient understanding of and compassion for the homosexual in his/her sins as for all other sinners
– the loving support and encouragement of the church . . . to include homosexuals in its fellowship so that they are not tempted by rejection and loneliness to seek companionship in a gay world
– pastors informing themselves about homosexuality . . . and encouraging an understanding of and compassion for persons who live with this . . . and dispelling the prejudices under which they suffer

Over the years, the church at large has not attempted to create these kinds of conditions on anything like a broad scale. For this reason alone, it would be fitting for the CRC to seek God's forgiveness.

VI. Recommendation

Seeking the forgiveness of God as a church, however, is more complicated than we wish, for while the church as a whole has been quite silent, there is and has been within the church a community that is very familiar with the 1973 report. This community within the CRC community is well acquainted with all of it—the exegetical foundations, the pastoral promises—and has been for many years. This community is made up of the persons among us who are the subjects of the report as well as many of their family members and other supportive friends. This community is made up of persons who love the Lord deeply. Many of them have spent agonizing years struggling with their sexual identity. Many of them have thoughtful questions about the 1973 report. All of them have been waiting, waiting for their church to keep something of its promises. They have been waiting a long time.

Meanwhile, most of what they experience from their churches is not at all in line with the grace written into the pastoral promises of 1973. Therefore, we as a committee ask synod to call the churches to repentance for their failures, as expressed in this prayer:

Lord, our gracious God,
We have sinned against you.
We have not done the things we ought to have done.
We have not kept the promises we made.

Instead of trying to become a place where persons who love you and
    are homosexual could find a gracious dwelling,
We confess that we have continued to build walls.
We have avoided them.
We have been cruel.
We have called names and used insulting language.
We have wished that they would just go away.

Truly, Lord, there is little health in us.
We have wronged these children of yours,
    these brothers and sisters of ours,
And we repent of our sins.
We are sorry for what we have done
    and for what we have left undone.

Lord, forgive us our sins through the blood of Jesus.

Dear heavenly Father, we love you.
We love you for keeping your promises,
And we want to be like you.
We want to keep our promises.
Help us, Father, to do so.
Help us to love our gay and lesbian sisters and brothers.
Help us love with words and deeds.

Strengthen our resolve to listen to their stories,
    to share their pain,
    to learn from others,
    to walk together on life's journey.

Lord, we have questions.
We do not know everything.
Give us the grace not to act otherwise.
Give us the humility to attend to what we do know.

We do know that life is more complicated than we wish.
We do know that we need your forgiveness for the past
And your grace for the future
As we continually struggle to be the church,
Faithful to your Word,
Faithful to each other.
In Christ. Amen.

VII. The process

Our mandate is not completed by confession. We hope to submit a broad report touching on matters such as the spiritual ministry of the church, justice issues, transformational ministries, and ministry to families. It is our intention to submit this report to Synod 1999 for information and to ask synod to make

the report available to the churches for study and response. After the churches have been given opportunity to study the report and respond, the committee will reconvene to consider the responses and to alter the report accordingly. Once completed, we will submit our final report to Synod 2001. Because of this plan, we request that synod extend our mandate until Synod 2001.

It is our desire to gather information from the churches to contribute to the work of our committee. We do not want this report simply to remain the work of our committee; we truly hope and pray that it will become a reflection of our commitments as a denomination. Please pray for the committee as it continues its work and for the churches of the Christian Reformed denomination as together they reflect on ministry to and with persons who are homosexual.

> Committee to Give Direction about and for
> Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members
> Rose Alons
> Mary-Lee Bouma
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I. Introduction

Part I of the report of the Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members was sent to the churches in October 1998. That part concluded by identifying the process being recommended as well as the additional matters to be dealt with in the second part of the report. The committee herein offers the completion of its work in the confidence and hope that it will assist our churches in ministering more effectively in the name of Christ.

II. The spiritual ministry of the church

The church ministers through the teaching and proclamation of the Word of God, through worship, through prayers, through the holy sacraments, and through pastoral visits. The church ministers in these ways to all its members. It proclaims the gospel, making known that we are all saved by grace through Jesus Christ. It calls us to faith and to commitment. It calls us to an obedient life and to gratitude to God. More specifically, among other things, it teaches us about ourselves and about our sexuality, its purposes and its boundaries. The church instructs, guides, comforts, and sometimes admonishes, even rebukes, when we are not obedient to the commands of our Lord.

All of this is ministry, essential ministry for all persons, including those who are homosexual. When the church reminds us of our brokenness and tells us not to trust our own spirits but to trust the Spirit of God, who speaks through the Scriptures, it is ministering to us about our sexuality. And when the church invites us to come to the table of the Lord as repentant sinners, we are once again *one in the Lord* in spite of all our differences and in spite of our sins. This is ministry, essential ministry, also to persons who are homosexual, ministry that helps them find their place within the body of Christ.

The church does not always create special ministries for specific groups of people—for example, parents who have lost children in death or persons disabled by accident in their youth—even though these people have specific angularities to their spiritual needs. The church ministers to these as well as others through all the regular ministries that Christ has assigned to it.

In addition to all of these regular ministries, the church must sometimes focus its ministry on the specific needs of certain people. That is what the l973 report on homosexuality spoke about. But that kind of ministry has often not been done. However, since much of it is private, more of it may be taking place than we think, though it is known only to those involved. Because many persons who are homosexual have not made this fact known to the church out of fear about the response they might receive, the church has had no opportunity to minister to the specific needs of these people.

As a committee we heard wonderful stories from some homosexual persons about how other members of the church have supported them, encouraged them, helped them overcome their shame, and admonished them when they needed admonition. However, more commonly we heard stories of the church's silence and lack of ministry, stories which indicate an unwillingness on the part of the church to talk with them about their homosexuality and their spiritual struggles.

When considering a specific ministry to persons who are homosexual, we do well to remember that there is no such person as "the homosexual." Same-sex attraction in no way defines the personality, morality, life-style, occupation, or family history of homosexual persons. They are as different from each other as heterosexual persons are. Some are moral; others are not. Some are caring, loving people who love the Lord with all their heart and soul and mind, and others are not.

Ministry, especially pastoral care, must be specific to each person. Prejudgment is prejudice. Making pastoral assumptions before meeting a person and hearing her or his story is not only poor pastoral care; it also violates an officebearer's subscription to the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 43), which reminds us not to "judge anyone unheard." In spite of their individual differences, both the conversations we have had with persons who are homosexual and literature we have read about homosexuality identified several common spiritual issues among homosexual persons.

III. Common spiritual issues among homosexual persons

A. Shame

Persons who experience same-sex attractions have some common experiences that require the ministry of the church. The first and in many ways the most significant of these is their experience of themselves as different, as abnormal, as being not the way most others are. Since their differentness is related to their sexuality, it is a very personal and private matter. Their early responses to this growing awareness, usually in early adolescence, include a wish to keep it concealed and an attendant fear of exposure. They sense that, if others would know, they would lose esteem, be judged negatively, and perhaps would even be ridiculed and rejected. These early shame responses sometimes lead to an intrapsychic denial of the same-sex attraction, which can persist well into adulthood.

The process of becoming self-aware is often a complex experience. For many it begins at an early age and gains definition as they grow older. They may discover that they are attracted to persons of the same sex as well as to persons of the opposite sex and that the balance between these two shifts as they mature. If, as they grow older, their same-sex attractions become dominant, the outcome is often a deep loneliness and a sense of isolation. They develop a deep sense of not belonging, even though they may have a caring family and good friends. Beneath all such relationships is the sense that, if others knew about their sexuality, they would think differently about them, esteem them differently, and perhaps not accept them. Keeping this part of themselves hidden produces a sense of falseness, a lack of honesty and a phoniness, and at the same time a strong sense of shame about who they are in a very deep part of their personality.

They may feel enormous shame simply for experiencing the attraction itself. This shame can be pervasive. It often isolates the person from genuine community, from any sense of belonging, even from the sense of belonging to the family of God, the church. It affects their sense of self, including their sense of being a new self in Christ, and often leads to depression and suicidal thought. This is a shame about something they did not choose and about something they did not do. It is a shame they do not deserve. Yet it is a shame that erodes their sense of well-being and their sense of love and grace.

Shamed persons need the very community they fear. Persons who live with the poison of shame have a deep spiritual need for community, for deep and intimate personal relationships in which they love and are loved and in which they are valued by others. They need the relationships of shared lives, relationships in which they know and are known, known even in the brokenness of their sexuality, and yet are loved and valued.

B. Identity in community

The church of Jesus Christ has the antidote to this shame. In the church God gathers his people into a new community and gives them a *new* identity. Believers are a new creation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the bride of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ. Individually they are children of God. The church has this identity because of the actual, historical reality of Christ's death and resurrection. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). Neither who we are nor what we have done excludes us from this new community. Together we have been forgiven and accepted by God, and our shame has been taken away. In turn we must create an accepting, forgiving community of the unashamed.

As adopted children in the family of God we share these family characteristics with each other:

1. Everyone in the new community is fallen. We are all broken and weak. Each of us is a sinner, and we deserve some of the shame we have.

2. On the cross Christ bore the shame as well as the guilt of everyone in this new community. ". . . upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Cor. 5:21).

3. Everyone in this community participates in Christ's holiness. "And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified" (I Cor. 6:11). We are now, by God's definition, a clean, pure, unashamed, holy community.

This new community must practice these commonalities:

1. We no longer see each other as persons who are guilty of idolatry, theft, greed, drunkenness, sexual immorality, slander, or swindling. Although that is what we were, we are now clean and holy (I Cor. 6:11). We give up these old judgments about others.

2. Because Christ has borne the weight of our brokenness, our weaknesses, and our sins, we can acknowledge them with each other. "But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another"

(I John 1:7) because "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

3. In this community we experience the power of healing prayer, following the advice of James when he says, "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

4. In this community we treat each other not only with justice but also with grace and mercy.

Our very humanity depends upon our connectedness. To be disconnected, isolated, alone in the universe is to lose our very humanness. We were made to live in community, and without it we die. Even broken community is better than no community, but the best community of all is a reconciled, redeemed community where each thinks of the other as better than her/himself and where the last shall be first and the first last.

All of us have this same need, and if we do not find such community within our families and within the church, we are likely to seek it elsewhere. Persons who experience same-sex attractions sometimes seek it within the gay and lesbian communities of larger cities. The cry for acceptance voiced by many homosexual persons is a cry for community.

C. Identity

"Who am I?" is a question all people ask, especially adolescents growing into adulthood. It is a question that has deep spiritual significance. As John Calvin said in the forward to the *Institutes*, "Who am I?" and "Who is God?" are the two major spiritual questions every person must answer. He also observed that the two questions are related. No one can answer one question without answering the other.

How we label or identify ourselves often defines us. Our identity tells us to what community we belong, how we are to live, and to some extent what our purpose or meaning is. Persons who experience same-sex attractions often identify themselves in terms of this aspect of their personality, just as a person who is crippled is tempted to identify herself as "the cripple" or a person who is athletically gifted as "the athlete." Emotional impairments such as depression, schizophrenia, or uncontrolled anger have the same power to define identity. They have this power partly because of the pervasiveness of these issues in a person's life and partly because other people tend to identify certain people according to these characteristics. This tendency to reduce a person to some aspect of her or his person is dehumanizing and unchristian.

Taking on an identity may make an individual less flexible and more static than that person might otherwise be. Especially for young people, "coming out" may concretize their sexual identity while it is still being understood or being formed. Taking on a gay identity as secular culture defines it may mean the uncritical acceptance of one's desires and attractions and allowing those desires to shape behavior. Therefore, lesbian/gay/bisexual support groups which do not foster spiritual transformation and a new identity can erode both faith and obedience.

Some persons who experience sexual attractions to others of the same gender feel a need to tell family and friends, coworkers, employers, and the community that they are gay or lesbian. There seem to be many reasons they do this:

1. To be known and accepted completely as they are.
2. To live honestly, not inauthentically.
3. To find and be supported by others who have experienced similar painful struggles.
4. To raise the issue publicly, promote a positive image of homosexual persons, and engage others in discussion.

The ministry of the church to persons with same-sex attractions begins with enfolding these persons into community while at the same time sounding the message of the gospel that our sexual identity is not our deepest and true identity. We need to challenge the idea that one's sexuality is the predominant definer of who a person is. Our sexuality must not own us more than we own it. One's core identity must not be hostage to one's sexual identity or sexual orientation.

The enduring message of the gospel is that male or female, American or Canadian, homosexual or heterosexual, crippled or blind—none of these adjectives defines who we truly are. These words describe some aspect of ourselves, but they are adjectives, not nouns. Even our moral behavior no longer defines us when we are born again in Christ. Listen carefully to the Word of God on this subject:

> Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. *And this is what some of you used to be.* But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
>
> <div align="right">(I Cor. 6:9-11, NRSV, italics added)</div>

Acknowledging the struggles and temptations and moving toward this new identity in Christ allow one to be honest, to receive the love of the Christian community, and, above all, to have hope. This is no easy task. This change of identity is part of what the Scripture calls "becoming a new person in Christ." This becoming is not an instantaneous, one-time event. It begins with an act of grace received in faith, but it is also a process. One needs to grow into this new identity so that it shapes one's self-image, one's way of thinking, one's way of responding, and one's behavior. When the church enfolds homosexual persons into its fellowship, they are empowered to live beyond their sexual identity.

D. Temptation and sin

The desire for sexual union outside of marriage is rightly understood in Christian moral teaching as temptation. There are many kinds of sexual temptations, some of them mutually exclusive. Nearly all human beings experience sexual temptations at various times in their lives, with various degrees of intensity. But temptation is not the same as desire, attraction, or even arousal. Temptation is the urge to do what we know to be wrong. Sometimes strong, sometimes persistent, sometimes seemingly irresistible, such an attraction, no matter how beautifully it is pictured and how vital it seems to our life and happiness, is an attraction to sinful behavior.

Good ministry requires that we be clear that temptation is not sin. Whether gentle and fleeting or persistent and consuming, even if it brings us to the edge of disobedience, temptation is neither sinful nor shameful. Scripture clearly teaches that our Lord was tempted in all ways even as we are, yet he did not

sin. We must be clear that temptation becomes sin only when we give some form of assent to it, some kind of saying yes. We know that we can commit adultery in our hearts as well as with our bodies, but that too involves some form of assent. Sometimes we *fall* into sin; sometimes we *yield* to temptation; sometimes we *intentionally and deliberately* sin. Whatever the degree of willfulness, sin needs both forgiveness and cleansing.

But what does a tempted person need? What a tempted person needs is both strength to resist and a way of escape. In our weakness we need to be empowered. Ephesians 6:10-18 shows the way. We do not overcome temptation. Christ has done that for us. We put on his truth and righteousness, and, when we are fully clothed with what he has done for us, "having done everything," we stand firm. We do not fight the devil. Christ has done that for us. We are "strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power." If we struggle in our own power, we lose. If we rest in his, we can stand firm.

Believers must pray to be delivered from temptation, as modeled by the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." We need to pray as a community, the community of the tempted ones who pray for one another. We cannot stand against the fiery darts of the evil one alone. We need other Christians. We need their prayers.

Let us not be too quick to say that "God allows no one to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear." However true, such a statement is a bit like saying to a parent who has lost a child, "All things work together for good to those who love God." It shows an insensitivity about, a lack of empathy with, those who suffer and struggle.

E. The gift of celibacy (self-control)

In the seventh chapter of Corinthians (vv. 1, 8-9, and 32-35) the apostle Paul recommends singleness as a preferable state for Christians. These passages clearly teach that one need not be married in order to have meaning in life or to fulfill one's purpose or role in this world. In fact, marriage is often detrimental to serving the Lord. The reasons advanced are that being married in times of great trials is very difficult and that marriage belongs to the order of things that are passing away (Matt. 22:30 and I Cor. 7:29-31). When the kingdom fully comes, marriage will be no more. According to I Corinthians 7:29-31, those who are citizens of the kingdom begin to live in the new fellowship that replaces marriage. This Scripture passage teaches that it is not wrong to marry but that singleness is preferable.

But what are single persons to do about their sexuality? What are youth between the ages of 12 or 13 (the age of sexual maturity) and 26 or 27 (the median ages of first marriages) to do when they "burn with passion"? This is a very important question for *all* adult single persons—unmarried, divorced, or widowed—as well as for celibate homosexuals. Persons who are homosexual, like other adult singles, often struggle intensely with their sexual drives. On the one hand, their sexual drive impels them to seek a deeply intimate personal relationship with another, but at the same time, Scripture seems to forbid such sexual intimacy with persons of the same sex. Their sexuality attracts them only a little or in some cases not at all to persons of the opposite sex.

For Christians the problem is compounded by Jesus' statement to his disciples about marrying or staying single. When Jesus told them that divorce is contrary to the will of God except in instances of unfaithfulness of one

spouse, the disciples responded, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." To this Jesus replied,

> Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.
> (Matt. 19:8-12)

Who are the ones "who can accept this"? What did our Lord mean by "only those to whom it has been given"? Is renouncing marriage (making oneself a eunuch) for the sake of the kingdom of God potentially possible for anyone? None of these questions is answered in this passage in Matthew or the parallel passages in Mark 12 and Luke 20. However, the apostle Paul, when speaking of married people who mutually decide to forgo sexual relations in order to devote themselves to prayer, states that they should do so for only a limited time so that Satan will not tempt them because of their "lack of self-control." He adds, "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind" (I Cor. 7:7).

The church has understood these passages as teaching that some people have a gift that allows them to forgo sexual relations. Such persons may choose not to marry. What then of those who do not have such a gift, such a charisma, from God? What if marriage is not possible or not permissible for them, for whatever reasons? In particular, what about those who are sexually attracted to persons of the same sex? If marriage is not possible and they do not have the gift, or charisma, necessary to control their sexuality, what are they to do? It is this dilemma that has led many Christian writers, including many ethicists, either to allow for or to argue for a same-sex equivalent to marriage. For example, Lewis Smedes, in the revised edition of *Sex for Christians*, writes,

> I still believe that the Creator intended the human family to flourish through heterosexual love. I still believe that homosexuality is a burden that homosexual people are called to bear, and bear as morally as possible, even though they never chose to bear it. I still believe that God prefers homosexual people to live in committed and faithful monogamous relationships with each other when they cannot change their condition and do not have the gift to be celibate. My mind has not changed in any basic way since I set these opinions to paper nearly two decades ago.
> (P. 239)

The question of what to do about sexuality is no mere question of theological theory. It is, rather, a sometimes desperate question of a Christian who is homosexual, struggling to be obedient to her or his Lord. It is also an urgent pastoral concern (see Report 42, *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 628-31, where both the pastoral dimensions and the ethical issues are explored in detail). If a person lacks self-control but marriage is not possible or is in some way an obstacle to serving God, is sin then the only option?

What is this *gift*, or *charisma*, of which Paul speaks in I Corinthians 7:7? It is commonly called the gift of celibacy. Scripture, however, nowhere uses that term. Rather, in the immediate context (I Cor. 7:5) Paul calls this ability to deny oneself sexual relationships "self-control," saying some people have it and others lack it.

Galatians 5:22-23 speaks of self-control as one of the fruits of the Spirit: "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity,

faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things." Self-control is listed along with such virtues as love, joy, peace, and gentleness among the things which are produced by the Holy Spirit in those who belong to Christ. A "fruit of the Spirit" is not the same as a "gift of the Spirit," but some of these Christian virtues are also described as gifts, or charisma, of the Spirit. For example, in I Corinthians 12 and 13 Paul speaks of spiritual gifts, including the gifts of faith, hope, and love. Both love and faith are fruits of the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit, so it is not strange for Paul to speak of a gift (self-control) that is also a fruit of the Spirit.

At the conclusion of his teaching on gifts, Paul instructs us to "strive for the spiritual gifts" (I Cor. 14:1). We may seek them and pray for them. Gifts are not some power or special ability that God either gives or doesn't give to us without possibility of change. In many places in the New Testament the Holy Spirit promises to give Christians whatever they need in order to obey and serve God. Christians who lack self-control of their anger or their sexuality must seek it and ask God for it. Married as well as singles need self-control, including self-control of their sexuality, for a well-disciplined life.

Finally, Scripture is clear that even though virtues such as love and faith are both fruits of the spirit and gifts of the Spirit, they are also commanded of us. We are called to love and to believe and are held responsible when we do not. The fact that both are gifts of the Spirit does not relieve us of responsibility. No one may argue that he is relieved from the obligation to love or to believe because he does not have that gift of the Spirit.

So, too, with self-control. It is a gift of the Spirit, one of the fruits of the Spirit, and a command to be obeyed. Scripture speaks of it in Titus 2:11-15: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to *live lives that are self-controlled*, upright, and godly. . . . Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority"; in I Peter 1:13: "Therefore prepare your minds for action; *discipline yourselves*; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed"; and in II Peter 1:5-6: "For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and *knowledge with self-control*, and self-control with endurance . . . ."

The argument that one is excused from the obligation to be sexually chaste if one does not have the gift of celibacy (or self-control) rests on questionable grounds.

How then do we learn self-control?

1. We must seek it, desire it, and pray for it, alone and with others.

2. We must believe that God gives us what we ask in Jesus' name.

3. We must know our own weakness, know that we are fully capable of falling into sin. We must "beware when we think we stand, lest we also fall." We must let this knowledge of weakness and vulnerability lead us to trust in God's power.

4. We must practice self-control. Learning self-control in other aspects of our lives is a virtue that shapes our character and enables us to say no. Or, to put it differently, self-indulgence is the enemy of self-control.

5. We must learn to flee temptations like pornography, which is not only dangerous but addictive.

6. We must be accountable to fellow Christians. For example, a person striving to learn self-control should find a partner or small group with whom to meet regularly for support, prayer, and monitoring each other's behavior.

7. We must learn to live one day at a time, for "tomorrow will bring worries of its own" (Matt. 6:34).

8. We must talk about our temptations. Hiding them and keeping secrets gives them a power that can be broken only by allowing others to bear our burdens with us.

F. *Sexual brokenness and healing*

God promises the healing of all our diseases, of whatever distorts our lives, of that which troubles our relationships, and of that which destroys shalom—whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. He tells us that healing and the gospel go together. The power of God is shown in changed lives, changed in all sorts of ways. When Jesus, the firstborn of the Father, came into the world, the new creation was made manifest. Those who believed in him became new people, and those who were sick were healed.

Christ commissioned the apostles (Luke 9:1-6) and later the seventy (Luke 10:8-9) to preach the gospel and heal the sick. The book of Acts repeatedly demonstrates the connection between the proclamation of the gospel and healing (e.g., Acts 3:8-12; Acts 4:29-30). Among the gifts of the spirit given to the church is the gift of healing (I Cor. 12:9). And James commissions the church to a ministry which pairs the forgiveness of sins and healing.

All Christians experience God's healing hand in many ways in their lives. Nearly every small illness has the potential to develop into a serious, even deadly, illness. Again and again God hears our prayers and heals us and those we love. It is, however, important to remember that God does not promise to heal us every time, from *all* our diseases and from *all* our brokenness throughout our lives. In fact, he tells us the opposite in Scripture. Some brokenness and some disease will not be healed until we come into his presence. Some live with the pain of unhealed brokenness throughout their lives.

Sometimes healing comes as a direct answer to prayer and sometimes, perhaps most often, through the healing services of medicines, counselors, and surgeons. So, too, with sexual brokenness. We need to turn to God for healing, but he often answers our prayers through the ministry of others. An important part of the church's ministry is the communication of hope, but it must be a realistic and well-grounded hope. The church must communicate all that God promises but also no more than he promises.

Many persons with same-sex attractions testify to the healing they have experienced. This healing comes in many forms and various degrees: (1) diminished inclinations, (2) a greater measure of self-control, (3) a supportive Christian community that brings peace and wholeness into their lives, (4) strength and support in a continuing struggle throughout their lives, (5) a greater attraction to the opposite sex, (6) and in some cases the ability to marry and have a family.

All persons must be encouraged to seek whatever healing God may provide for them. They should seek it both through the common ministry of

their congregations and through the specialized ministries for persons who are homosexual. Most of the specialized ministries to persons who are homosexual are related to Exodus International, a worldwide coalition of Christian ministries that offer support to men and women seeking to overcome homosexuality. Many of these ministries also offer specialized support to spouses, families, and friends. These ministries include support groups, individual counseling, literature, and other resources. Ministries associated with Exodus International differ from one community to another, so pastors making referrals are encouraged to contact local groups and become thoroughly acquainted with them. Information about the ministry of Exodus, including a complete list of referral groups, is available from Exodus International—North America, P.O. Box 77652, Seattle, WA 98l77 (206-784-7799).

IV. Guidelines to evaluate ministries

Many parachurch organizations and associations of churches now minister to people who experience same-sex desires. Obviously, this committee cannot evaluate every existing ministry. These programs range from those which are unhealthy and destructive to those ministering grace and healing. Even programs bearing the same name vary from region to region. Therefore, pastors and congregational leaders should carefully evaluate a ministry before referring a member to it.

A. Common features of effective ministries include the following:

1. Acceptance and affirmation, seeing every human being as one who is created in God's image and therefore having worth and dignity.

2. Hope for healing with an understanding that sanctification is a process and that wholeness is a lifelong journey.

3. A setting which makes intimate nonsexual relationships between people of the same and different genders possible.

4. Accountability in holy living and help in cultivating a new mindset.

5. Understanding of the distinction between godly sorrow for sin, which leads to repentance, and the shame of church or societal disapproval.

6. Belief that in Jesus' resurrection God has given power to break the power of sin and the cycles of sinful behavior.

7. Help in dealing with anger against God, against society, and specifically against those who have hurt, abused, and misused.

8. Worship which is God-centered, joyful, and hopeful.

9. Supportive small groups in which there is healing prayer and confession of sin.

B. A few cautions regarding ministries for homosexual persons

1. Beware of ministries which promise complete or immediate change in desires and orientation.

2. Beware of ministries which offer little or no hope for change in desires and orientation.

3. Beware of programs which mandate gender-specific behavior or tell participants they must learn to display certain "male" or "female" traits. In other words, be cautious about ministries that place any emphasis on male and female roles which have no biblical foundation.

4. Beware of ministry models which do not respect individual Christians' abilities to hear and respond to God's voice and which do not recognize people's decision-making abilities.

5. Beware of inflexible, legalistic models of ministry, for example, any ministry requiring individuals to follow a prescribed pattern of steps to ensure results.

6. Beware of ministries which too quickly identify same-sex attraction as irreversible homosexuality.

V. Compassionate ministry and the local church

Referrals are no substitute for the ministry of the local congregation, and referrals are rarely successful unless they are made in the context of a compassionate church. Each congregation must do its own ministry. But what can a church do which has no specialized ministry in this area? What good news, what gospel, does it have to extend to persons who struggle with same-sex attractions?

First, the church must remember that gospel, not law, has the power to redeem our lives and make us whole. Saying no is not enough. The church must reach out with love and compassion, creating a fellowship of mutual honesty, caring, and support.

Christian ministry begins with compassion. Just as Jesus was moved by the cry of the blind man on the way to Jericho, by the widow following the body of her son, by the lepers who cried out from the crowd, and by the tears of the woman who washed his feet, so too we must first be moved in our deepest feelings by those who struggle with same-sex attractions.

Compassion is what we feel when we are in touch with the pain of others even though their situation may be very different from anything we have experienced. Compassion is born of imagination, the ability to put ourselves into their situation and know what it is really like. Only when we know our own brokenness, our own pain, and our own temptations can we begin to identify with others and feel compassion. That compassion is the motivational power for ministry. It moves us to reach out and do what we can. It also helps overcome their shame, the shame they do not deserve.

Compassionate ministry seeks to incorporate those with same-sex attractions fully into the body and life of the church, satisfying their need for community, for intimacy, for oneness with others, and their need to serve their Lord. Much of their sexual struggle lies here. What they need and what sometimes gives desperate urgency to their need is not genital sex but to love and to be loved, to know and to be known, to feel worthwhile about themselves.

Compassionate ministry begins with lifting the taboo. Love and compassion will help us overcome our apprehension about same-sex attractions or about those persons who experience sexuality this way. We need not stop our ears or avert our eyes. We must break down the conspiracy of silence and the

walls of separation, which convey judgment, alienation, exclusion, and loss of hope to our brothers and sisters in Christ and to those outside of Christ who have been shut out of the church.

We must pray for all who struggle with sexual temptations, some with attraction to persons of the same sex, others to persons who are not their spouses, and still others with deep dark secrets about their sexuality and their sexual behaviors. We must speak of who we are in Christ and how little being male or female, black or white, Cuban or American, homosexual or heterosexual says about who we are. We must bear one another's burden, support one another in the Christian life, strive to live in holy obedience, hold out hope to one another, and seek healing from all our impairments.

When we do these things, we will meet our Lord, for he has said, whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to me.

VI. What the local church can do

While many congregations will find it useful to be able to refer their members to helpful parachurch ministries, every church can minister to its attenders who experience same-sex desires. Some congregations will develop full-orbed ministries specifically designed for those who are seeking healing in the area of their sexual practice and desires. Other congregations may be able to offer a single helpful ministry in this area. Local congregations may not be able to replicate every program that the specialized ministries provide. But every congregation can create a hospitable climate and an inclusive environment for those who experience same-sex desires.

A. Creating a hospitable climate

1. **Use language which assumes and describes the church community as the family of God.** The church is a new community of Jesus Christ's followers, who are single, married, and from all varieties of backgrounds. In other words, teach that the church is not simply a collection of biological families or parts of families. Because the church is a new community, it needs to provide a home, a haven, for its members.

2. **Model and encourage intimate nonsexual relationships with people of the same gender and the opposite gender,** in other words, brother-brother, sister- sister, and brother-sister relationships. Church leadership should demonstrate and refer to friendships of all sorts with all ages and both genders. Such friendships can be fostered by, but are not limited to, various small-group Bible studies, ministry teams, prayer partnerships.

3. **Provide an environment for confession of sins and accountability to other Christians.** In small-group settings as well as in public worship, provide a safe place to share struggles, confess sins.

B. Some practical ways to make the ministry of the whole church more inclusive of those who experience same-sex desire

1. **In congregational prayers** include the health and well-being of the single Christians' relationships as well as the health and well-being of the congregation's marriages and families. For example, leaders could pray for faithfulness and commitment in friendships and for love and forgiveness

toward housemates as well as for patience and understanding in marriage and families.

2. **During liturgical confession** refer by name to specific sins, including homosexual practice. Use Scripture and prayers which refer to the fact that Christians are tempted by, struggling with, and trapped in a variety of sins. Train liturgists/worship leaders to use language which demonstrates that every kind of sin displeases God and that no sin is beyond God's forgiveness, that God's power can break the power and the cycles of sin.

   Mention sinful practices of attitude and thought as well as of behavior and speech, including such things as gossip, slander, theft, murder, violence. Among sins confessed should be those often perceived as ordinary and mundane as well as those which may be seen as dramatic.

3. **In preaching** talk about a variety of sexual sins, including all sexual practice outside of marriage (premarital, extramarital, same-sex). Give examples of God's grace and comfort to those who struggle with brokenness and also examples of people who have been freed from the power of homosexual sin.

4. **Encourage small groups** which are made up of singles and couples, are mixed in age, or are arranged geographically in addition to or instead of small groups which are only couple-oriented, geared to singles, and/or age specific.

C. Ministry that local churches have offered
   The following are some examples of congregational ministries that various Christian Reformed members have found helpful in their struggle with same-sex desires:

1. Prayer partnerships with others within the congregation.

2. Congregational members who told the individuals that they prayed for them.

3. Biblical teaching on the sinful nature of homosexual practice, on God's forgiveness, and on God's power for the believer to resist sin.

4. Practice of and training in classic spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, corporate worship, and service.

5. A setting where it was known that other church attenders also experienced same-sex desires.

VII. Pastoral care to families
   Although the mandate given to this committee focuses on ministry to the homosexual member, there is a broader challenge to the church. The reality of homosexuality impacts not only individuals but also other family members. Parents, siblings, and spouses experience emotions which are evident in times of crisis. In the pastoral advice given in Report 42 of the *Acts of Synod 1973*, ministry to family members is included as well as ministry to homosexual persons. Ministry will be hampered if family members do not experience pastoral care from the church.

When families are confronted with the reality of a loved one's homosexuality, the struggles that ensue often involve shock, denial, anger, shame, blame, grief, heartache, and depression. The journey may be a long and lonely one if burdens cannot be shared. The church needs to respond with compassion. A church which responds with grace will more likely be able to hear and minister to the needs, fears, and concerns of the homosexual and his/her family than a church which responds with shame.

In his book *Windows of the Soul,* Ken Gire speaks of the power of story. He gives a personal illustration which speaks to how the church can also be there for family members even when there isn't complete understanding:

> If a story is to follow us home, find entrance through some door of our heart, it must be asked, consciously or unconsciously, two questions: What does this story have to say? And what does it have to say to me?
>
> A few years ago when reading Norman Maclean's story *A River Runs Through It,* I wrestled with those questions. . . . What was Norman Maclean's story saying?
>
> It was saying, I think, that the ones we most want to help are the ones we are often least able to help. It is a story about connecting with the people closest to us, how difficult that is to do, and how heartbreaking it is when, for whatever reason, we can't seem to do it.
>
> If that was what the story was saying, what was it saying, if anything, to me?
>
> I read *A River Runs Through It* at a time when I was trying to connect with someone I lived with and loved and should have understood but suddenly didn't, with someone I wanted with all my heart to help but even with all my heart, couldn't. It filled me with grief and sadness and questions like ones the father asked his son in Norman Maclean's story.
>
> "Are you sure you have told me everything you know about his death?" he asked.
>
> "Everything."
>
> "It's not much, is it?"
>
> "No," I replied, "but you can love completely without complete understanding."
>
> "That I have known and preached," my father said.
>
> When I read those words, it was as if the father had preached them to me. "*You can love completely without complete understanding.*" The words echoed in me as if off the walls of an empty cathedral in which I was the only person sitting in the pews.
>
> It was not required of me to understand. It was required of me to love, and to go on loving, completely.   (Pp. 78-80)

Loving even when we do not completely understand—may that be our attitude as the church ministers to family members as well, helping them to love completely without complete understanding, and loving them completely even when we are without complete understanding.

A. Role of the pastor

The pastor is the key to ministry from the church. Pastors are in a position to instruct their congregations and to alert members and officeholders to the responsibility they bear toward homosexual persons in the fellowship of believers. Pastors need to prepare their congregations to minister to serious needs. They have the opportunity to help create empathy among the members. Pastors may be limited in how much time they can personally spend in one-to-one contacts, but they should be able to put people in touch with resources as well as with two or three people who will walk with the hurting family members.

Authentic community needs not only to be taught but also to be caught—that is, to be modeled by pastors. Pastors should also encourage an understanding of and compassion for homosexual persons, while dispelling prejudices under which they suffer. One way to do so is through preaching and encouraging the use of resources for reflection, discussion, and study in small groups. One example of an excellent resource is *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* by Dr. Richard Mouw. This is an excellent book for those who wish to know how it is possible to hold on to their convictions and still dialogue with and show Christian love to those with whom they differ. Mouw writes, "It is important to distinguish between beliefs and behaviors with which we disagree and the very real human beings who believe and behave in those ways. We need to be very clear about our disagreements without responding irrationally to homosexual persons" (pp. 87-88). Mouw stresses in another place that "the whole point of the biblical perspective is to promote a sexuality that is kind and reverent. So it is important that we present the biblical viewpoint kindly and reverently to those with whom we disagree about sexual standards. Not to do so is to undermine our own message. Sexual civility is an important way of living out our commitment to the gospel" (p. 94).

Another resource is the Pastoral Message from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Its pastoral recommendations are given here:

> With a view toward overcoming the isolation that you or your son or daughter may be experiencing, we offer these recommendations to you as well as to priests and pastoral ministers.
>
> *To parents:*
> 1. Accept and love yourselves as parents in order to accept and love your son or daughter. Do not blame yourselves for a homosexual orientation in your child.
> 2. Do everything possible to continue demonstrating love for your child. However, accepting his or her homosexual orientation does not have to include approving all related attitudes and behavioral choices. In fact, you may need to challenge certain aspects of a lifestyle which you find objectionable.
> 3. Urge your son or daughter to stay joined to the . . . faith community. If they have left the church, urge them to return and be reconciled to the community . . . .
> 4. Recommend that your son or daughter find a spiritual director/mentor who will offer guidance in prayer and in leading a chaste and virtuous life.
> 5. Seek help for yourself, perhaps in the form of counseling or spiritual direction, as you strive for understanding, acceptance and inner peace. Also, consider joining a parents' support group or participating in a retreat designed for [Christian] parents of homosexual children. Other people have traveled the same road as you, but may have journeyed even further. They can share effective ways of handling delicate family situations such as how to tell family members and friends about your child, how to explain homosexuality to younger children, how to relate to your son or daughter's friends in a Christian way.
> 6. Reach out in love and service to other parents who may be struggling with a son or daughter's homosexuality. Contact your parish about organizing a parents' support group. . . .
> 7. As you take advantage of opportunities and support, remember that you can only change yourself; you can only be responsible for your own beliefs and actions, not those of your adult children.

8. Put your faith completely in God, who is more powerful, more compassionate and more forgiving than we are or ever could be.

<div align="right">(Pp. 290-91)</div>

To church ministers:
1. Be available to parents and families who ask for your pastoral help, spiritual guidance and prayer.
2. Welcome homosexual persons into the faith community. Seek out those on the margins. Avoid stereotyping and condemnations. Strive first to listen. Do not presume that all homosexual persons are sexually active.
3. Learn about homosexuality and church teaching so that your preaching, teaching and counseling will be informed and effective.
4. Use the words *homosexual*, *gay*, *lesbian* in honest and accurate ways, especially from the pulpit. In various and subtle ways you can give people "permission" to talk about homosexual issues among themselves and let them know that you're also willing to talk with them.
5. Maintain a list of agencies, community groups and counselors or other experts to whom you can refer homosexual persons or their parents and family members when they ask you for specialized assistance. Recommend agencies that operate in a manner consistent with [church] teaching.
6. Help to establish or promote existing support groups for parents and family members.
7. Learn about HIV/AIDS so you will be more informed and compassionate in your ministry. Include prayers in the liturgy for those living with HIV/AIDS, their caregivers, those who have died, and their families, companions and friends. . . .

<div align="right">(P. 291)</div>

As pastors become aware of such guidance and intentionally speak, teach, and model the core ideas mentioned here, family members will be encouraged and strengthened as well.

B. A circle of support

Families need a circle of support. This should be a small circle. This should be a place where they can be completely open. This support group can blunt the sting and share the burden. The complexity of issues and emotions which are dealt with by family members will require ongoing support from others.

Families may not have the opportunity to make the choice of "coming out." The homosexual member may already have made that decision for the family. Because family structures vary, there are cultural implications involved. Various ethnic groups may deal with the issue of homosexuality differently.

Confidentiality is absolutely essential when family members share their burden with others. This confidentiality must not be broken.

C. Continuing ministry

A continuing ministry is necessary for families, especially if their loved ones continue to practice homosexual behavior. It is often hard enough for family members to share with others that a loved one has a homosexual orientation. This becomes even more complex if that loved one is engaged in explicit homosexual practices. Sometimes churches have been helpful in shouldering the burden of family members who are initially trying to come to terms with the sexuality of their loved one. However, long-term sustaining support is often lacking, especially if little or no change is seen in the loved one's condition or behavior. The circle of support may then narrow to include

only those who are willing to commit to the family for an extended period of time.

Family members often feel ill at ease about how to address a number of situations. Are they to inquire about their loved one's sexual activities? If so, how? What if the family member wants to have a friend or partner come along on the family vacation? What if the loved one has gone through years of counseling and finally agonizes to the conclusion that his/her orientation is unalterable? How do family members decide what level of friendship is acceptable for their loved one? Should family members shun friends or partners of their loved one, or should they interact with them as they would with friends of another family member? These can be real issues with which families struggle. When the church provides a long-term sustaining presence, regardless of the outcome, it demonstrates the unconditional love of Christ.

Some Christians do not support a homosexual person's family members who attend their church if the homosexual person shows any sign of developing a relationship with a same-sex friend. They believe that if they show any sign of understanding or compassion to the individual or even to that individual's family members, they are condoning the behavior and therefore participating in the sin. This perspective lacks an appropriate idea of boundaries. Individuals can be a supportive presence for family members even if they don't agree with all of the decisions that are made. By acknowledging the complexity of the issue, they can empathize with the burden family members experience and can walk with them instead of shunning or shaming them.

Ministry to family members over a long period of time will begin to realign the family members' focus so that they will be able to move on eventually. Over time, the fact that their loved one is homosexual will not be the all-consuming focus of their lives. However, even after years have passed, there may be times when family members will need to talk. Members of the support group need to be sensitive to those times and should from time to time initiate the subject by asking, "How is it going? How are you doing?"

The church may provide ministry through the establishment of small groups (in some churches these are called I.C.U.'s—Intensive Care Units). Members of such groups commit to confidentiality and long-term support if necessary. Membership in an I.C.U. must be voluntary for successful ministry.

Family dynamics are different from family to family, but it is not uncommon for tensions to arise within the family because of differences about how to respond to or interact with a homosexual loved one. It is not uncommon that families become polarized, one part of the family taking a hard-line, condemning stance, another part of the family taking the other extreme in hopes of keeping the peace of all the family members at whatever cost. Such intrafamily tension may result in temporary or, at times, long-term periods of distance or even of estrangement in relationships. The body of Christ must be willing to show compassion and to foster a spirit of love and understanding when there is family disunity.

Families dealing with homosexuality may need support groups and may also need guidance in their choices. Family members often pass through a maze of circumstances about which decisions have to be made. A listening, supportive presence can help family members think through the situation. Oftentimes having a listening ear can help family members come to decisions with which they feel comfortable.

Family members also may struggle with their relationship with God, especially if there is little or no evidence of behavioral change in their loved one. Believers who are aware of this struggle should take the initiative to ask family members from time to time how this situation has affected or is affecting their relationship with God. There is a variety of pastoral approaches which can be implemented in helping family members work through periods of anger or disillusionment with God.

Though most of the literature on homosexuality speaks of situations involving a son/daughter or brother/sister, there are also instances when a spouse discovers that his/her life partner is gay. These are particularly difficult situations because they involve the breaking of trust. Issues of autonomy and mutuality are also affected. The dynamics of these complex situations often differ, depending upon whether there are children born to the couple and whether this discovery is revealed in a gradual way or through a crisis situation. Sometimes the homosexual person may wish to remain married. Most often professional help is needed in such situations because of the depth of the hurt and brokenness of the relationship. Anita Worthen and Bob Davies in *Someone I Love Is Gay: How Family and Friends Can Respond* specifically address common issues which arise in such cases.

D. A haunting fear

In all families touched by homosexuality, there is one overwhelming fear that grips the heart of parents, siblings, and spouses—the fear that the homosexual loved one may be or may become infected with the HIV virus and develop AIDS. This fear is very real and may grow if the loved one continues to be sexually active. The ache and terror are insistent. The cruel hands of fear tighten their grip and refuse to relinquish their hold. Families need accurate information concerning this issue. It is important that family members learn how HIV is transmitted and how it is not transmitted, stages of HIV disease, various treatments, and the side effects of such treatments.

E. A healing ministry

For many families the homosexuality of a loved one can become an all-consuming focus. Some family members have difficulty in focusing on other aspects of life. The healing ministry of the church involves helping family members come to terms with and transcend their loved one's situation. To the extent that the church family can empathize and support family members, healing in the form of release from shame can occur, and a sense of shalom can be restored. This does not mean that all issues will be resolved for families with homosexual loved ones. It does mean, however, that family members can come to a point of transcending the situation and finding some meaning and purpose in living through this experience. For some this may mean getting to know their son/daughter, their brother/sister, or even their spouse on a deeper, more authentic level than ever before. Others have shared that through their experience they were able to get to know and support those who have had a similar experience. Sometimes family members transcend this situation by getting the opportunity to tell their story in an educative way to others. Some family members may even become involved in starting a support ministry for family members in their church or local community. Families can be helped to move on, to find gratitude in their lives again, and to give

themselves to others again. There is a sense of healing and release in embracing the knowledge that God knows and lifts up those who are brokenhearted.

F. Concluding prayer

It does not take complete understanding and outstanding expertise to minister to family members of a homosexual person. Sometimes those who know their own brokenness are in the best position to walk alongside of these family members. We can learn much from each other, and God can use all persons, broken though they are, as vehicles of his grace. As William E. Amos, Jr., once wrote, "God has chosen the fragile vessels of people to be vehicles of grace and messengers of God's ministering presence and mercy" (*When AIDS Comes to Church*, p. 29).

As we think of the struggle of family members to come to terms with and transcend the reality of a loved one's homosexuality, we are reminded again of how each of us needs humbly to ask for God's guidance. Ken Gire gives us this prayer for our mutual edification:

> Please God,
>
> Reveal to me through stories something of what it is like to walk around in someone else's shoes. Show me something about myself in the stories I read, something that needs changing, a thought or feeling or attitude. Deliver me from myself, O God, and from the parochial and sometimes prejudiced views I have of other people, other nations, other races, other religions. Enlarge my heart with a story, and change me by the characters I meet there. May some of the light from their lives spill over into mine, giving illumination where there was once ignorance, interest where there was once indifference, understanding where there was once intolerance, compassion where there was once contempt . . . . (P. 82)

VIII. Justice issues

A. Justice and grace

In its mission statement the Christian Reformed Church pledges,

> As people called by God . . .
> We pursue God's justice and peace
> In every area of life.

As a closing section to this report, we ask the church to reflect on the pursuit of God's justice and peace with respect to homosexuality.

Why is this emphasis in our mission statement? Put simply, we serve a God who is just. Actually, God *loves* justice! He *is* righteous! He wills for his creations that which is right and true and fair. Scripture proclaims and echoes this from start to finish:

> "For I the Lord love justice." (Isa. 61:8)
>
> For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds . . . . (Ps. 11:7)
>
> "The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just.
> A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he." (Deut. 32:4)
>
> And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty,
> your judgments are true and just!" (Rev. 16:7)

Justice and righteousness are at the very heart of God. They should also be at the very heart of his imagebearers. Scripture proclaims this loudly and clearly as well:

> But let justice roll down like waters, and
> righteousness like an everflowing stream. (Amos 5: 24)

> They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and
> lay them on the shoulders of others; but they
> themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to
> move them. . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,
> hypocrites! For [you] tithe mint, dill, and cummin,
> and have neglected the weightier matters of
> the law: justice and mercy and faith. (Matt. 23:4, 23)

Scripture repeatedly characterizes God as epitomizing justice and righteousness, and Scripture repeatedly calls us to reflect him in these attributes as we deal with others (and with his whole creation).

It is worthy of note that in Scripture, companion words are regularly paired with the word *justice*. For example, the word *righteousness* is often nearby, if not parallel with *justice*, and that combination feels sensible. Righteousness underlines justice, or at least our sense of what true justice is. However, there are also companion words to the word *justice* that seem less sensible: *love*, *kindness*, *mercy*, and *faith*, for example, or even our mission statement's word: *peace*. What are we to make of these?

We know, of course. We know that if God were *only* just, or *simply* just, if God delivered only what we deserve, not one of us would be available for the business of reflecting him! For we are sinners—all of us—and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Thank God that "he does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:10). Thank God that he has given us his gracious and free gift: "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

In other words, God adds something to justice, something amazing, something utterly mysterious, something impossible for us to comprehend, because it runs counter to our imperfect sense of justice, something unfathomably merciful, something called grace. God gives us the mercy we do not deserve. And, once again, God calls us, the recipients of his lavish grace and mercy, to reflect him:

> "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36)

> He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does
> the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,
> and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)

> ". . . justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have
> practiced. . . ." (Luke 11:42)

This is the Word of the Lord.

B. Working toward justice and grace

When we ask how we can apply these concepts of justice and grace to the way we minister to and with persons who are homosexuals, we hear echoes of *both justice and grace* in the following Pastoral Guidelines, to which we committed ourselves in 1973:

   a. Homosexuality (male and female) is a condition of disordered sexuality which reflects the brokenness of our sinful world and for which the homosexual may himself bear only a minimal responsibility.
   b. The homosexual may not, on the sole ground of his sexual disorder, be denied community acceptance, and, if he is a Christian, he is to be wholeheartedly received by the church as a person for whom Christ died.

c. Homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture.

d. The church must exercise the same patient understanding of and compassion for the homosexual in his sins as for all other sinners. The gospel of God's grace in Christ is to be proclaimed to him as the basis of his forgiveness, the power of his renewal, and the source of his strength to lead a sanctified life. As all Christians in their weaknesses, the homosexual must be admonished and encouraged not to allow himself to be defeated by lapses in chastity, but rather, to repent and thereafter to depend in fervent prayer upon the means of grace for power to withstand temptation.

e. In order to live a life of chastity in obedience to God's will the homosexual needs the loving support and encouragement of the church. The church should therefore so include him in its fellowship that he is not tempted by rejection and loneliness to seek companionship in a "gay world" whose godless lifestyle is alien to a Christian.

f. Homosexuals, especially in their earlier years, should be encouraged to seek such help as may effect their sexual reorientation and the church should do everything in its power to help the homosexual overcome his disorder. Members of the churches should understand that many homosexuals, who might otherwise seek therapeutic aid, are deterred from doing so by the fear of detection and consequent ostracism. Christian acceptance and support can in all such cases be a means toward healing and wholeness. On the other hand, to those who are not healed and who must accept the limitations of their homosexuality, the church must minister in the same spirit as when it ministers to all who are not married.

g. Christians who are homosexual in their orientation are like all Christians called to discipleship and the employment of their gifts in the cause of the kingdom. They should recognize that their sexuality is subordinate to their obligation to live in wholehearted surrender to Christ. By the same token, churches should recognize that their homosexual members are fellow-servants of Christ who are to be given opportunity to render within the offices and structures of the congregation the same service that is expected from heterosexuals. The homosexual member must not be supposed to have less the gift of self-control in the face of sexual temptation than does the heterosexual. The relationship of love and trust within the congregation should be such that in instances where a member's sexual propensity does create a problem, the problem can be dealt with in the same way as are problems caused by the limitations and disorders of any other member.

h. It is the duty of pastors to be informed about the condition of homosexuality and the particular problems of the homosexual in order that the pastor may minister to his need and to the need of others, such as parents, who may be initially involved in the problems of homosexuality. The pastor is also in a position to instruct his congregation in appropriate ways about homosexuality and to alert members and office holders to the responsibility they bear toward homosexuals in the fellowship. He can encourage an understanding of and compassion for persons who live with this sexual disorder, and dispel the prejudices under which they suffer.

i. The church should promote good marriages, and healthy family life in which relations between husband and wife and between parents and children are such that the psychological causes that may contribute to sexual inversion are reduced to a minimum. Parents should be encouraged to seek Christian counsel and help when they see signs of disordered sexual maturation in their children.

j. Institutions and agencies associated with the church that are in a position to contribute to the alleviation of the problem of homosexuality are encouraged to do so by assisting ministers to become better informed, by offering counseling services to the homosexual and his family, and by generally creating a Christian attitude in the churches as well as in society as a whole.

k. The church should speak the Word of God prophetically to a society and culture which glorifies sexuality and sexual gratification. It should foster a wholesome appreciation of sex and expose and condemn the idolatrous

sexualism and the current celebration of homosexualism promoted in
literature, the theater, films, television, advertisements, and the like.
                                          (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 51-53)

Justice is a very broad landscape, and its terrain is difficult. There are more
questions than answers here, and several factors militate against our being
just. As humans, we have a natural inclination to look for simple and quick
answers to difficult and emotional issues, and this tendency can lead to a
premature drawing of lines and a lack of compassion in our responses.
Besides, many heterosexuals have a natural tendency to feel uncomfortable
when dealing with anything homosexual. This natural unease is augmented
by the way Scripture speaks of homosexual acts. The Bible we read and value
as our rule for faith and life speaks plainly and harshly about homosexual acts.
This fact tends to make it difficult for some even to imagine being helpful
toward homosexuals and understanding of their issues. Furthermore, we are
surrounded by raucous demonstrations of homosexuality: gay-pride parades,
in-your-face homosexuality, highly inflamed confrontations between gays and
antigay crusaders. All of these things can make it very tempting to steer clear
of anything homosexual. As Reformed Christians we have attempted to be
slower to draw lines, more understanding of gray areas, less interested in
making quick judgments. We are gifted by God with intellectual honesty,
committed by the hope within us to becoming more and more comfortable
with being uncomfortable. We are a people committed to reflecting God's
justice and mercy.

When issues of justice for gays and lesbians are put before us as citizens,
what is actually at issue? Often the issues are human-rights issues or equity
issues: the political, civil, and social rights of every citizen.

Political rights safeguard the ability of citizens to take part in and be responsible
for the political direction of a country. Civil rights protect freedoms such as
freedom of speech, religion, association, and so forth, by the state or by other
bodies of society. Social rights ensure access to such essentials as housing,
adequate food, employment, income, health care, and education.
                              ("Legal Equality: A Public Justice Response to Discrimination
                                          against Gays and Lesbians," CJL Foundation 1996, p. 4)

Which of these would we want to deny to homosexual persons? On what
basis? Would our being proactive for a kind of justice for persons with whom
we have large disagreements be seriously misunderstood? Would that be a
problem? If so, to whom?

These kinds of scenarios are not usually simple. Often they are, or feel to us
as though they are, part of a larger political gay/lesbian agenda. Perhaps that
is true. Perhaps if we give an inch, we will lose a mile. Perhaps. But shouldn't
we entrust the future to the God who holds it and who calls us to "do justice
and love kindness and walk humbly with our God"?

As Christians we must learn to exercise justice and grace when we disagree.
We have different views on the subject of homosexuality. Some would ban all
who understand themselves to be homosexual, whether celibate or not, ban
them to some kind of outer darkness. Others believe that we have badly
misread the Scriptures since 1973. Some believe that the biblical norm for
sexual behavior is genuine intimacy rather than heterosexuality. How should
we deal with such divergent views? Homosexuality is a volatile issue in our
circles and in the broad evangelical church world today. Emotionally charged

issues tend to bring quick reactions, personal attacks, threats to secede, and so forth. But Scripture says, "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness" (James 1:19-20).

Attitudes soften when people can present their views without being interrupted, when a person's reasons for adopting certain beliefs are truly heard. Often other people are driven by life experiences far different from our own. Can we calm down enough to hear the stories of others? Can we listen to each other without simply looking to win a debate?

In the present atmosphere it is possible for people to lose their livelihood when they espouse a view on homosexuality different from that of the majority. Sometimes a more accepting view has developed reluctantly when one's own child is gay. How should we deal with such differences in a way that is just and gracious? Are divergent views intolerable in this area? Is this the place where the line must be drawn for the sake of orthodoxy and job security?

Many of us may never have a significant and personal emotional experience with homosexuality. We may never have a family member or close acquaintance challenge us to carefully review what we thought were simple issues, simple distinctions. However, we may sometime be part of the leadership of a church or classis where significant situations regarding homosexuality arise, situations that feel quite personal to us.

IX. Scenarios for further discussion and reflection

Rather than simply state answers to specific questions and situations, we invite the Christian Reformed churches to engage in some thought and reflection to help our denomination in its ministry to and with homosexuals. We encourage the churches to discuss the following situations in their councils and in educational settings.

A. A homosexual in a same-sex partnership wishes to participate in the Lord's Supper celebration. How should we respond?

B. A nonpracticing homosexual wishes to serve as a Cadet counselor. What should we do?

C. What do we say to parents who ostracize their homosexual child or treat the child as if she has died? What do you say to a homosexual member who has cut off all relationships with his or her family?

D. What should members of the Christian Reformed community say to their legislators regarding the issue of same-sex spousal rights? What about companies that provide benefits to same-sex partners of employees?

E. How should we respond to members of the CRC whose views differ from those espoused by the 1973 report on homosexuality, either accepting same-sex unions or rejecting homosexual persons. How should we respond to persons in leadership positions?

F. What needs to be done in our congregations to foster an atmosphere in which effective ministry to and with homosexual members can be carried out?

X. Recommendations
   The committee recommends

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Melvin Hugen (chairman), Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma, and Rev. Gerald Zandstra as representatives of the study committee.

B. That synod receive the committee's report (Part 1 and Part 2) and send it to the churches for their response.

C. That, when the report is mailed to the churches, an accompanying letter request that each church hold an adult-education class to discuss the report, that each council review and discuss the report, and that each church submit a response by April 1, 2000, summarizing its discussions and reactions. The general secretary's office will be responsible for the mailings and for a follow-up note in April 2000.

D. That *The Banner* be asked to include a series of articles regarding the report and its ministry suggestions.

E. That the presently constituted synodical committee reconvene after the responses have been received to consider the responses and modify its report accordingly.

F. That the committee submit its final report to Synod 2002 after distributing it to the churches in the fall of 2001, according to synodical regulations.

   Grounds:
   1. This process will allow churches to participate in the process rather than being passive recipients of a synodical decision.
   2. The churches will take more ownership of that to which they have contributed.
   3. One of the failures of the 1973 report was that it remained only a report in the *Acts of Synod 1973* without being widely known by the members of the Christian Reformed Church. The report of the committee of 1973 remained primarily the report of the committee. Synod served as the approving body, and the churches generally made use of the report only when a situation arose which required reference to it.

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Committee to Give Direction about and for
Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members
   Rose Alons
   Mary-Lee Bouma
   Cornelius J. De Boer
   Melvin D. Hugen, chairman
   John Kreeft (deceased)
   Yong-Ju Oh
   Herman Van Niejenhuis
   Robert Van Noord
   Gerald L. Zandstra

</div>

Appendix A
Suggested Reading

Alexander, Marilyn Bennett, and James Preston. *We Were Baptized Too.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. (This book will help the church recognize that gay and lesbian Christians aren't strangers "out there" somewhere, but they are our beloved sisters and brothers in Christ. While many will not agree with some of the conclusions drawn, this book may help people to empathize with the reality of homosexuality among believers.)

Bawer, Bruce. *A Place at the Table.* New York: Simon, 1993.

Dallas, Joe. *Desires in Conflict.* Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1991.

---. *A Strange Delusion.* Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1996.

Davies, Bob, and Lori Rentzel. *Coming out of Homosexuality: New Freedom for Men and Women.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.

Dew, Robb Forman. *The Family Heart: A Memoir of When Our Son Came Out.* New York: Ballantine, 1994. (This book details a mother's journey especially well. Though she ends with a different position from our own denominational stance, this work captures one family's experience and gives insight into some of the perceptions and struggles which occur when a family member comes out of the closet.)

"God Loves Our Gay Son." *The Banner* 11 Apr. 1994: 12-13.

Homosexuality: Seeking the Guidance of the Church. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Church in America, 1998. (A five-part study for small groups or church-education classes. The last half of this publication is an appendix which details the synodical statements and decisions made regarding homosexuality in the Reformed Church in America from 1978 to the present. Available from RCA Distribution Center, ph. 1-800-968-7221.)

Johnson, Barbara. *Where Does a Mother Go to Resign?* Minneapolis: Bethany, 1994.

---. *Stick a Geranium in Your Hat and Be Happy.* New York: Inspirational, 1990. (The author shares the ways in which God brought her through deep waters and how she was again given the gift of joy. "Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional.")

Mouw, Richard J. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992. (See especially Chapter 7: "How to Be Civil about Sex," pp. 81-96. This excellent work shows how to combine a civil outlook with a "passionate intensity" about our convictions. It aims at a convicted civility.)

National Council of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Marriage and Family. "Always Our Children: Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers." *Origins: CNS Documentary Service* 9 Oct. 1997: 285-91.

Schmidt, Thomas E. *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.

Siker, Jeffrey S., ed. *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.

Smalley, Gary, and John Trent. *The Blessing.* Nashville: Nelson, 1986. (Includes an important section for adults on repairing relationships with their parents.)

Smedes, Lewis. *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve.* San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1993.

Stott, John. *Same-Sex Partnerships? A Christian Perspective.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker/Revel, 1998.

Swindoll, Charles R. *Avoiding Stress Fractures.* Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1990. (This book addresses all kinds of situations that bring stress and pain into our lives. It is a practical biblical guide to lift up believers and help them realize their hope and destiny.)

Wilson, Sandra D. *Released from Shame.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.

Worthen, Anita, and Bob Davies. *Someone I Love Is Gay: How Family and Friends Can Respond.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996. (See Chapter 9, "Just for Spouses: Special Concerns and Questions.")

Appendix B
Biological, Psychological, and Exegetical Issues

I. Summary of biological research

Since 1973, biological research into homosexuality has looked into the following areas: possible differences in brain structure between heterosexuals and homosexuals, genes that might be associated with homosexuality, possible inheritance patterns of homosexuality, and prenatal hormone influences.

The most widely discussed work involving brain structures was that of Simon LeVay, who in 1991 reported on a comparison of certain brain-stem structures of nineteen homosexual men who had died of AIDS, sixteen heterosexual men (six of whom had died of AIDS), and six heterosexual women (one of whom had died of AIDS). He found that the third interstitial nucleus of the hypothalamus (INAH3) of homosexual males was on average structurally more like that of heterosexual females than like that of heterosexual males. This was not the first report of a possible difference in brain structure in homosexuals, but it captured much media attention. These findings should be treated as preliminary for the following reasons: they have not been replicated by other researchers, the sample size was small, the sexual orientation of heterosexuals was assumed if their hospital chart did not mention homosexuality (even though six of the men died of AIDS), and the changes may have developed over an individual's lifetime from other causes. LeVay himself said the work was preliminary and that it only opened the door to other studies of brain cells and chemicals and their relationship to homosexuality. He also stresssed that from his study one could not conclude that the differences in brain structure caused homosexualiy or were caused by it. Similar comments can be made about other studies of brain structure by such researchers as Swaab and Hofman (1988, 1990), Allen and Gorski (1991, 1992), and Demeter et al. (1988), for example.

Technology capable of studying gene sequences made possible the publication of two papers (Hamer et al., 1993; Hu et al., 1995) investigating the genes of families of homosexuals. The homosexual men selected for the first study came from families whose pedigree indicated transmission of homosexual orientation through the maternal side of the family, that is, via the X chromosome. It was found that thirty-three of the forty pairs of homosexual brothers shared similar gene sequences in the Xq28 region of the X chromosome. The

second study found that heterosexual brothers did not share this Xq28 sequence. Although the studies were technically of high quality, they have not been replicated. The men chosen for the studies were a highly selective sample, not randomly chosen. Thus, the studies' results can be applied only to homosexuals selected in this way, not to the general homosexual population. Most important, the fact that homosexual brothers share a gene sequence does not necessarily mean that this gene sequence causes homosexual orientation. In fact, the second Hamer article states, ". . . the Xq28 region was neither necessary nor sufficient for a homosexual orientation." Finally, a more recent study (not a gene analysis) by Bailey et al. (1995) found that homosexual fathers have a higher proportion of homosexual sons than heterosexual fathers do. This finding would contradict the maternal-transmission hypothesis of Hamer and Hu.

Although for a time it was thought that genetics is not involved in homosexuality, Bailey and Pillard (1991) published a paper indicating a 52 percent concordance for male homosexual orientation in identical twins, 22 percent for fraternal twins, 9.2 percent for non-twin brothers, and 11 percent for adoptive brothers. In a second study Bailey et al. (1993) reported similar values for female sexual orientation. Bailey's results were replicated by Whitam et al. in 1993. However, King and Mc Donald (1992) found concordance rates in identical twins of only 25 percent (10 percent if one excludes bisexuals). Much lower concordance rates were also reported by the Minnesota Twin Project (1986). The particularly high rates of concordance in the Bailey studies may have been influenced by the recruitment methods used, which consisted of advertisements which may not have blinded volunteers to the purposes of the study. Subjects were self-selected rather than randomly selected.

The studies of prenatal hormone influences are generally indirect and heterogeneous. There are considerable difficulties in applying the results of studies on the offspring of female rats exposed to prenatal hormones to human homosexuality. These difficulties range from the incomparability of human and rat homosexual behavior to the very high (nonphysiologic) hormone doses used in these studies. Some cite the brain-structure studies already mentioned above to support the idea that prenatal hormones affect the development of sexual orientation. The assumption is that the structures are different from birth and that they are sensitive to hormonal influence—neither of which has been demonstrated. A third thread in prenatal-hormone-influence research is derived from accidents of nature and therapeutics. Human female fetuses exposed to too much of the male hormone testosterone (produced by adrenal tumors) look female and can reproduce, but their adult behavior is masculine. Some of these fetuses become lesbian or bisexual adults. A recent study found that children of mothers exposed inadvertently to synthetic estrogen during their pregnancy are somewhat more likely to become bisexual or lesbian. A fourth argument advanced in favor of the prenatal-hormone hypothesis is that boys who demonstrate effeminate behavior are more likely to become homosexual (Bailey et al., 1995).

The biological research since 1973 is still preliminary and fragmented. There is no generally accepted hypothesis regarding the development of homosexuality. The synod report of 1973 stated, "It is important to understand that homosexuality is not the result of any conscious choice or decision on the part of the person to be homosexual. . . ." The research done since 1973 would

support that idea, but it does not provide a clear picture of how nature and nurture might interact to produce homosexuality.

II. Psychological perspectives

Many studies have been published since 1973 which provide information regarding the gay and lesbian population. And, as often is also true of other disciplines, psychological research and theory have provided a variety of results and conclusions. There is some agreement on a general description of homosexuality as a romantic attraction and sexual desire toward a same-sexed individual which sometimes leads to sexual behavior with a person of one's own gender. It is viewed as an orientation which includes the entire range of interpersonal relations (i.e., love, understanding, friendship, belonging, and companionship) and is not just a physical attraction.

Many experts believe that dichotomies such as homosexuality and hetero-sexuality are too simplistic and that there are varying degrees of sexual orientation, including bisexuality. Based upon observations made in his treatment and research center, Kinsey (1948) developed a continuum of sexual orientation which consisted of a seven-point scale ranging from 0 to 6, where 0 represented exclusive heterosexuality and 6 represented exclusive homosexu-ality, with a range of orientations in between. Others (e.g., Masters and Johnson, 1966) have developed similar scales, which measure such factors as love, sexual attraction, fantasy activity, and self-identification. When used both singly and in combination with each other, these scales can be helpful for understanding the multifaceted and complex nature of sexual orientation. Additionally, it is possible for a person's ratings to change over time. These ratings are not necessarily rigid. For example, same-sex fantasy during one period of a person's life would not necessarily be an accurate predictor of sexual orientation at another time in life.

Though the homosexuality prevalence figure of 10 percent appears fre-quently in church documents and other writings, more recent studies and surveys have revealed that the actual rate of homosexuality as a stable life orientation in our culture is more likely below 3 percent for both genders combined. The 10 percent figure has been attributed to Kinsey et al.'s 1948 study of males, where they reported that 4 percent of white males were exclusively homosexual throughout life after adolescence and that a total of 10 percent of white males were mostly or exclusively homosexual during at least a three-year period between the ages of 16 and 55. In fact, the rate of males who engage in sustained homosexual practice over a significant period of adult life is probably less than 5 percent of the male population, and the rate of men who manifest a sustained and exclusive commitment to homosexual practice is certainly less than 3 percent (Jones and Yarhouse, 1997). Female homosexuality continues to be estimated at approximately half or less than the male rates; it appears to characterize less than 2 percent of the female popula-tion. Thus, when the genders are combined, homosexuality almost certainly characterizes less than 3 percent of the population; the correct percentage may be even lower than 2 percent (Jones and Yarhouse, 1997).

The major professional societies of the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry do not define homosexuality as a mental illness or disorder. Both disciplines seem to believe that to do so would require demonstrating that homosexuals cope with life more poorly than heterosexuals do. Early studies

suggested that the incidence of mental illness was indeed higher among homosexuals, but subsequent examination revealed that the early studies used poor techniques, as the people studied were selected from prisons or were psychiatric patients. In 1957 Hooker reported research which was interpreted to indicate that adult homosexual males who were not in or seeking therapy were no more neurotic than heterosexual males. In 1973 Saghir and Robins extended the work of Hooker by using a much larger sample, including gay men, lesbians, and single heterosexuals. They reported that the majority of gays and lesbians studied were well-adjusted and productive.

Masters et al. (1992) inferred from Hooker's work that homosexuals are as emotionally healthy as heterosexuals, and that has been generally held to be common knowledge, whereas the factual basis for this assertion has come under more recent question. The conclusions drawn from both the Hooker and the Saghir and Robins studies have since come under serious criticism for their methodology (Jones and Yarhouse, 1997), with specific reference to subject selection and nonrepresentativeness of the sample. That is, in both instances, the subjects were specifically selected to exclude those with possible psycho-pathology. Consequently, the conclusions drawn are questionable. Jones and Yarhouse (1997) concluded that contemporary research continues to suggest higher levels of distress, at least, and likely also more severe difficulties such as major depression and suicidality for the gay and lesbian population. They stated that "scientific evidence falls far short of a convincing case that homo-sexuality in itself constitutes a psychopathological condition. The evidence also suggests that one would be on shaky grounds in proclaiming that there is no evidence that homosexuality is anything more than a healthy, normal lifestyle variant." Nonetheless, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1973, no longer considering it a disorder, and the American Psychological Association took a similar stance shortly thereafter.

A variety of myths, stereotypes, and erroneous ideas have arisen about gay and lesbian individuals over the years, and psychological research has been providing additional information over time. A common misconception, for example, has been that homosexuals are more likely to engage in child molestation (pedophilia). A significant body of research in the area of child abuse, including law-enforcement research, now exists which indicates that homosexual people are *less* likely to sexually approach children (Burgess et al., 1978) and that heterosexual men are more of a threat to children (Groth and Birnbaum, 1978).

It has been commonly believed that there is a gay/lesbian stereotype as well. In fact, gays and lesbians can be found in all strata of society. They are found among all races, cultures, religions, and occupations, although not necessarily in the same proportion. Gay and lesbian people exhibit a wide range of behaviors and values, just as heterosexual people do. Another common myth is that all gay men are effeminate and all lesbians are mascu-line. The fact is that few are gender atypical. In a 1980 study, Voelles demon-strated that no more than 15 percent of gay men are effeminate. Similarly, Storms (1980) found that the majority of homosexuals exhibit behavior consistent with their gender.

A variety of causes for homosexuality have been suggested over the years, ranging from exclusively environmental factors (nurture) to exclusively

biological ones (nature). Several studies have attempted to refute the idea of psychological causation. For example, the Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith study (1981) is often referred to as definitive evidence that the psychoanalytic hypothesis (that homosexuality derives from early childhood experience) is refuted. However, the results of that study may also be questioned because it was based on survey or interview research, which leaves it open to the influence of the phenomenon of adult reinterpretation of the past. As Jones and Yarhouse (1997) indicate, it appears that there is not enough evidence to prove the psychological hypothesis, but there is too much to dismiss it at this time.

Currently, the genetic, brain-structure, and prenatal-hormone causation hypotheses are receiving much interest (see I. Summary of biological research [above]). There is a substantive body of research in favor of those hypotheses, though the research is not conclusive. Similarly, there is a substantial body of literature in favor of hypotheses focusing on psychological and familial factors. The major emphasis in recent research apppears to be on biological factors, however, even though the biological theories appear to have "no greater explanatory value" than the psychological theories they seek to displace (Byne and Parsons, 1993).

Jones and Yarhouse (1997) introduce an interesting and relevant discussion about whether the presence of causative influences, either biological or psychosocial, render human choice irrelevant to the development of sexual orientation. They postulate that there are a variety of factors which may provide a "push" in the direction of same-sex preferences for some people, but they also state that there is no evidence that the "push" of these factors renders human choice utterly irrelevant. They agree with Byne and Parsons (1993), who say that human choice can be construed to be one of the factors influencing the development of sexual orientation but that a statement to that effect "is not meant to imply that one consciously decides one's sexual orientation." They suggest that sexual orientation is assumed to be shaped and reshaped by a cascade of choices made in a context of changing circumstances in one's life and by enormous social and cultural pressures and in the context of considerable predispositions toward certain types of preferences. This language seems to suggest that choice may also be influenced by both psychological/ familial factors and biological ones (see also M.S. Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace*, Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 80-105).

The possibility that same-sex preferences may be different in etiology and manifestation across persons, and perhaps across genders, has not been lost to this committee. Though there is little current research literature focused on women who become lesbian later in life, some members of the committee could share clinical and pastoral experience suggesting (a) that there may be differences between men and women in etiology and manifestation of same-sex preferences; (b) that for some individuals, their past experiences did make a difference in their preferences; and (c) that in some sense they had made a choice. Jones and Yarhouse state that adult converts to lesbianism may exemplify individuals whose erotic proclivities really are their sexual preference, as Baumrind (1995) and others have argued.

Most experts today believe that the cause(s) of homosexuality have not been definitively established; there is no agreement about its etiology, and much of the data is incomplete. Science has not yet identified what determines

heterosexuality, let alone homosexual orientation. Some experts express the belief that there are various causes of homosexuality, and many are leaning toward a combination of biological and environmental factors in their search for a cause.

Finally, the question of whether homosexual orientation can be changed has received considerable attention. Again, experts differ in their judgment about the possibility of sexual reorientation. It must be remembered in this consideration that many do not view homosexuality as an illness or something requiring change and, furthermore, that many gay and lesbian individuals have no desire to change.

Such professionals as Vanden Aardweg (1985), Nicolosi (1991), and Masters and Johnson (1979) believe that change, though demanding and difficult, is possible and advocate that reparative therapy should be recognized as a viable option for those who are motivated to pursue it. On the other hand, there are those such as Isay (1989) who argue that efforts to change sexual orientation can be harmful, with severe emotional and social consequences. Isay believes that strong consideration must be given to how injurious unsuccessful change may be to a person's self-esteem. Haldeman (1994) has also argued that homosexual orientation is immutable, or unchangeable, and has offered some criticism of claims made by those who advocate that change in sexual orientation is possible.

When statistics are cited which claim successful change, the question "What has changed?" must be asked. Has the person's orientation changed, or just his behavior? Psychologists are far from agreed on the *definition* of successful change. Some are satisfied with celibacy or heterosexual behavior (no change in orientation, change in behavior), whereas others require functioning as a heterosexual person with no homosexual inclinations (change in orientation and behavior). And the definition used has a bearing on the degree of success which can be claimed.

Given some lack of agreement about the definition of successful change, it does appear that there are some conditions which may predispose toward more rather than less success. Most spokespersons for change would agree that change is most likely when motivation is high, when gender-identity issues are not present, when actual homosexual practice has been minimal, and when there is a history of successful heterosexual functioning. These factors are revealed in change statistics cited. Successful treatment is reported for 30 to 50 percent of gay individuals who have had previous positive heterosexual experience (likely bisexual individuals), whereas successful treatment is reported for 0 to 20 percent of gay individuals seeking change who have had exclusively homosexual experiences. Though not all experts agree as to the efficacy of attempts to change sexual orientation, it is evident from the data that sexual orientation is not readily or easily changed.

III. Exegetical issues

Although a reconsideration of the exegetical issues is not part of this committee's mandate, while addressing ministry, the committee has been repeatedly challenged by thoughtful individuals within the Christian community who question the validity of the church's exegesis of those scriptural passages which speak of sexual behavior between members of the same sex.

We note that almost all of the new interpretations brought to the attention of the committee had already been advanced prior to 1970 and were addressed in the 1973 report. Whether they were adequately addressed or whether the church should take a new look at these passages is not for our committee to determine. The church has due processes to ask for reconsideration. We have addressed some issues related to differing judgments in Section III (Justice issues) of this report.

We also note, however, that there is a remarkable unity among Christian churches in rejecting the validity of these new interpretations. These alternative interpretations have been advanced to the ruling bodies of most mainline Christian churches in the United States and Canada, the intent being to seek changes in the moral teachings of these churches. With the exception of the United Church of Christ U.S.A. and the United Church of Canada, every major Christian body has been unconvinced by these new interpretations and has reaffirmed the traditional moral teaching of the church regarding same-sex relationships, as stated in the 1973 report of the Christian Reformed Church.

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I. Mandate

A. Background of the mandate

Three requests on the subject of ordination and "official acts of ministry" came to Synod 1995: two were overtures; one was a committee recommendation. Classis Alberta North requested synod to identify the "official acts of ministry" to guide churches which were developing staff ministries (Overture 3, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 324). Classis Red Mesa asked synod to change Church Order Article 55 so that persons properly authorized to bring the Word may also administer the sacraments (Overture 7, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 330). The Youth-Ministry Committee asked synod to appoint a study committee to consider how the 1973 synodical actions on office and ordination apply to "persons engaged in youth ministry and in other specialized ministries" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 209). Since all three of these requests involve both an understanding of "official acts of ministry" and an interpretation of the 1973 synodical action on office and ordination, Synod 1995 decided to appoint a study committee with the following mandate and grounds:

> That synod appoint a study committee to consider the matters of ordination and "official acts of ministry" (Church Order Art. 53-b) as these apply to youth pastors and persons in other specialized ministries who attain their positions by pathways other than the M.Div. degree.
>
> *Grounds:*
> a. Synod 1973 adopted a report on office and ordination, the conclusions of which invite a consideration of this matter. In that report ordination is seen as a "setting apart" of a certain person for a particular ministry within the church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).
> b. Increasingly congregations are calling and/or employing persons who are gifted and trained for a particular ministry in the church. This development ought to be considered by the denomination in the light of biblical and confessional material and synodical decisions (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 324; Overture 3 shows that this is not an isolated concern).
> c. If the proposed study would lead to the ordination of youth pastors, appropriate guidelines should be developed to increase the effectiveness of those whose career is to serve the churches in that capacity.
> d. This proposed study extends beyond the scope and capacity of the Youth-Ministry Committee as mandated by Synod 1991. The YMC does not have available the time and expertise needed for this study.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 744)

Because the background of this mandate extends as far back as 1973, the committee thought it would be helpful to list some of the key decisions on office and ordination adopted by Synod 1973 (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 62-64). That synod first adopted six observations as the framework within which guidelines adopted from the "Report on Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination"

were to be understood. In this framework synod was concerned not to lose a sense of authority in connection with ecclesiastical office. We quote in abbreviated fashion from some of these observations:

- "Nowhere in the New Testament is there a conflict between authority and service, or between ruling and love."
- "Christ only is Lord of the church, and no one may presume to rule in his place. Service and authority exercised in the church are in his Name and according to his Word."
- ". . . Christ grants, by his Holy Spirit, gifts of ruling service and serving authority . . . to particular people whom the church must recognize, in order that their gifts may be officially exercised for the benefit of all."
- "Officebearers . . . are recognized by the church to be representatives of Christ in the special functions for which they have been appointed."

Following upon this framework, synod adopted twelve guidelines for understanding the nature of ecclesiastical office and ordination. Again we quote or summarize the guidelines that have a bearing on the issues of this report. After affirming that the total ministry of the church is rooted in Christ and that all believers share in this ministry, the guidelines address the particular offices or ministries. These particular ministries are "functional in character" and "are characterized by service, rather than by status, dominance or privilege." To this language, borrowed from the study committee's recommendation, synod added these words: "These ministries function with Christ's power and authority, a power and authority rooted in obedience to his Word and expressed in loving service. In turn, those who are served are to respond with obedience and respect." Still, the difference between the particular ministries and the comprehensive ministry shared by all believers is said to be only a difference of function.

Synod 1973 adopted two guidelines on the Word and the sacraments:

> The tasks of the preaching of the Word and of the administration of the sacraments have been given by Christ to the church. Although in the Scriptures these tasks are not explicitly limited to special office-holders, historically they have been assigned to and carried out by those whom the church has appointed on Christ's authority.

> There is no valid biblical or doctrinal reason why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also be appointed to administer the sacraments.

> (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63)

The following guidelines on appointment to particular ministries are also significant for the issues before us:

> "Ordination" should be understood as the appointment or setting apart of certain members of the church for particular ministries that are strategic for the accomplishment of the church's total ministry. In this sense of appointment or setting apart, ordination has biblical precedent, and is valuable for the good order and well-being of the church.

> The ceremony of the laying on of hands is not a sacrament but a symbolic act by which the church may publicly confirm its call and appointment to particular ministries. As such it is useful but not essential.

> To invite only ministers, and not elders also, to participate in the laying on of hands is a departure from biblical example. Furthermore, there is no biblical

warrant for limiting the laying on of hands to the occasion of setting apart for the particular ministry of the Word and the sacraments.

Because the Scriptures do not present a definitive, exhaustive description of the particular ministries of the church, and because these particular ministries as described in Scripture are functional in character, the Bible leaves room for the church to adapt or modify its particular ministries in order to carry out effectively its service to Christ and for Christ in all circumstances.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 63-64)

This report will seek to understand the relationships that exist between these emphases contained both in the framework and in the guidelines adopted by Synod 1973.

B. Analysis of the mandate

The mandate given to this committee by Synod 1995 is both specific and generic. The history of the mandate has pointed out how two specific issues came together to shape the mandate: (1) the question about "official acts of ministry" in the context of staff ministries and the emergency situation in Classis Red Mesa concerning the absence of the sacraments in particular congregations due to the unavailability of ordained ministers of the Word and (2) the recommendation of the Youth-Ministry Committee that a study committee be appointed to consider whether persons engaged in ministry to youth and in other specialized ministries qualify for ecclesiastical office in the light of the guidelines for ordination adopted by Synod 1973. Both of these issues entail, among other things, a discussion of "official acts of ministry" and the persons qualified to perform such acts.

The generic nature of the mandate is suggested between the lines. Synod has asked that the committee consider the matter of ordination and "official acts of ministry" in relation to the specific issues mentioned above but not as limited to these specific issues. Precisely what synod had in mind by such an open mandate is not further specified. The committee assumes that synod wishes this report to assess the significance and meaning of ordination as reflected in the guidelines adopted in 1973, taking into account also the judgment of Synod 1973 that there existed a subtle gap between synod's concern about authority and office and the study report's emphasis on office as a service function. Because Synod 1973 adopted six observations as a framework within which the adopted guidelines of the study report should be understood, questions about the meaning of ordination to office still remain. Since these questions still remain and since ordination has a direct relation to the specific questions assigned, the committee judges that some discussion of ordination is necessary.

Thus, the implicit and explicit logic of the mandate require (1) a discussion of ordination and office in the light of the synodical decisions of 1973; (2) a definition of the meaning, function, and significance of "official acts of ministry"; (3) a consideration of how the issues of ordination and official acts of ministry should shape the church's response to the needs of Classis Red Mesa; and (4) how these should shape a perspective on the question of ordaining youth pastors and persons functioning in other specialized ministries.

II. Ordination and office

Since their adoption in 1973, the guidelines of Report 44 on ecclesiastical office and ordination have had a significant impact on the church. This report was the climax of a democratizing tendency developing during the prior two decades. As the framers of the report would likely agree, its tone was anti-authoritarianism, anticlericalism, and anti-officiousness. It emphasized ministry instead of office, service rather than status, dominance, or privilege. Office was viewed primarily as specialized functions, and the authority of office, as love and service. In fact, the report tended to view the special offices as little more than specialized functions of the universal office of believers with reference both to the tasks performed and the authority with which they are performed. As a critique of an authoritarian view of office (a view located in the past primarily in the attitudes of lay persons and officebearers rather than in the creedal statements or theological traditions on office), the report was legitimate, helpful, and to a large extent biblical. Obviously, in a Protestant tradition the tasks and authority of the apostolic office are entrusted to the entire church and not only to special offices. Thus the rise of authoritarian structures is precluded.

Synod 1973 accepted the conclusions of Report 44 with their anti-authoritarian, ministry-oriented concept of the special offices—except at one point: Synod did not object to the switch from "office" to "particular ministries" and to the claim that these "ministries are characterized by service, rather than status, dominance, or privilege," but synod did not adopt the report's definition of authority. In place of the report's definition—"the authority which is associated with the special offices is an authority defined in terms of love and service" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 715)—synod declared, "These ministries function with Christ's power and authority, a power and authority rooted in obedience to his Word and expressed in loving service. In turn, those who are served are to respond with obedience and respect" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63). In addition, synod adopted a framework which emphasized the authority of office and declared that biblically there is no "conflict between authority and service, or between ruling and love" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 62).

Did Synod 1973, both in its adopted framework and in its alteration of part of one of the report's conclusions, fall back into an authoritarian and officious view of office? Obviously not, for it adopted as its own eleven and a half of the twelve conclusions presented by Report 44 (1973). Thus synod accepted as fully biblical the emphasis on office as ministry and loving service. However, it rejected the definition of authority as a service, in which authority is reduced to a function. This rejection is clearly correct. While loving service must be the manner in which authority is exercised and the intended purpose of its exercise, loving service does not define the nature of authority. Its nature is that it is Christ's authority administered by persons placed in office for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. It is precisely the exercise of this authority that is the loving service of officebearers to the congregation.

Interestingly, Report 44 (1973) says similar things, but they were not included in its conclusions. Speaking of the authority of the church and of the special offices as residing in the apostolic message, the report affirms that "the functionaries now act with apostolic authority—better yet, they now act with the authority of Christ himself. Christ through his church has authorized and empowered them" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 700). In addition, the report refers

approvingly to the theological tradition which holds that "the office-bearers are not representatives of the church but of Christ" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 690). On this issue the Reformed theological tradition is complex, neither hierarchical nor fully democratic. Authority does not flow exclusively from the top down, from Christ to special officebearers to members of the church, nor from the bottom up, from Christ to the congregation to the special offices. In the former case, officebearers are the hierarchical rulers of the church on behalf of Christ; in the latter case, officebearers are merely appointed agents functioning on behalf of the congregation. In the Reformed understanding of office, relationships are not so simple, and keeping balance is absolutely essential. Both the congregation (because of the universal office of believer) and the persons in special offices have a mandate from Christ and are answerable to him, and yet they are answerable also to one another. Though the congregation selects persons to office, prays for them, and supports them, the officebearers do not become thereby mere agents of the congregation. They are also representatives of Christ to the congregation. Actually, Report 44 (1973) agrees with this emphasis, but it does not draw from it conclusions which we think are inevitable.

If the Reformed view of office contains within it the idea that officebearers represent Christ to the congregation and hence to some degree (even while remaining subject to the congregation) stand over against the congregation, is it not necessary for the sake of clarity concerning office to regain some sense of "status"? Report 44 (1973) uses "status" pejoratively by associating it with dominance and privilege, but it need not have such associations, and in dictionary definitions it in fact does not. Instead, it is a legal term referring to one's condition, as in a change from single to married status. Associated with such legal status are rights and duties. It is similarly the case with both political and ecclesiastical office. A person placed in office is no longer merely a private citizen or a participant in the universal office of believer. Becoming an officebearer is an objective change in status which enables a person to exercise the authority of an office and to carry out its duties. Ecclesiastical office is established by Christ. He did this by appointing apostles to represent him, and they in turn appointed others to more effectively carry out and to provide guidance and order for the ongoing work of Christ. Throughout its history the church has continued to appoint officebearers, and the shape and function of their offices have been affected by time and circumstance. Nevertheless, an office exists objectively—beyond and outside the subjective capabilities and giftedness of individuals—because it is established by Christ and belongs to him. It is Christ's office because it is his authority and ministry that are administered and exercised by the person who enters that office.

Report 44 (1973) does not reject such an emphasis, but one must read carefully to find it because the report is tilted vigorously toward a different emphasis. For example, "The right of a special office-bearer to be heard and heeded by his fellow church-members does not lie just in the fact that he has been appointed to an office but rests to a very significant extent in his 'godliness' and Christian character" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 705). Of course, all would agree that persons placed in office should manifest the requisite qualities and giftedness which the New Testament prescribes. Yet the validity of official acts and the acknowledgment of their authority are not determined simply by the subjective qualities of the officebearers, nor did the report actually say that. To

make the authority of an office or its acknowledgment rest exclusively on spiritual qualities possessed by the officebearer would be to affirm what the early church considered heresy. There is an objective character to office which exists outside of or beyond the subjective qualities of the person placed in office.

Perhaps, although this issue is not central to our discussion of ordination, the church would do well to rethink what Report 44 (1973) suggests about the meaning of the ceremony of the laying on of hands. If entering office refers to an objective change of status, perhaps the laying on of hands has a greater significance than merely that of indicating appointment. Report 44 (1973) recognizes that this ceremony may be understood as a blessing of the new officebearer. However, to avoid any notion of a magical ritual which assumes that gifts not heretofore present are being communicated, the report chooses to equate the laying on of hands with appointment or representation. Thus the report concludes that the ceremony is but a gesture indicating the church's acknowledgment of resident gifts and its appointment of the person as its representative in carrying out special functions. In this understanding the ceremony has no meaning beyond being a visible statement of these realities. The church could as well dispense with the gesture and verbalize the meaning.

Perhaps the ceremony need not be quite as barren as that. The biblical notion of blessing is rich, and it is associated not with magic but with prayer. It is not necessary to conclude that spiritual gifts are being directly communicated. Instead, it is possible to associate the laying on of hands with prayers for the grace necessary to the work of ministry, as Calvin did. As Report 44 (1973) quotes Calvin, the church "ordains him to the service of God, by the laying on of hands, and expresses its certainty that God grants its prayer" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 685). Such is the biblical concept of blessing: a prayer as well as the certainty that the prayer is granted. God's grace is not magic, but its efficacy is essential for anyone assigned the task of administering the authority of Christ on behalf of Christ and for the benefit of his body. There is always a sense of mystery associated with the workings of God's grace and Spirit. Certainly, ordination to office is entitled at least to that sense of mystery. One may think of blessing as God's promised quickening by his Spirit of resident gifts so that they become effective for his purpose. After all, after the laying on of hands the ordained person is no longer merely a representative of the congregation but has become also an agent of Christ to the congregation.

In our summary conclusion we quote first from H. De Moor's *Equipping the Saints*: "the offices . . . are organs of Christ's gracious rule; they constitute . . . the presence of Christ enabling his people to fulfill their calling; their authority is an *administered* authority which remains the authority of the Lord of the church; [and they exist] to equip the saints for ministry" (p. 296). Hence, office belongs not to the person ordained to it but to the church and, more especially, to the Lord of the church. Even though ordination to office requires that persons possess certain spiritual gifts and in certain instances must meet ecclesiastically determined requirements for training/education, office is not established upon those gifts and training. Instead, office is founded upon and flows from the one threefold office of Jesus Christ and thus points to the reality that the church is a Christocracy. Each office participates in this one threefold office, and each contains its own mixture of the characteristics of this threefold office: proclamatory (kerygmatic), supervisory (ruling), and pastoral/diaconal

characteristics. The focus of each office may reflect one of these characteristics more than the others, yet each office has aspects of all three. The administration of Christ's threefold office and his authority is, of course, a ministry *(diakonia)* to the church. Since it is Christ's authority that is administered, the form and shape of such administration must reflect the ministry of Christ. Officebearers are nothing if they are not imitators of Christ. Consequently, the shape and function of such administration can never be authoritarian but must always be characterized by loving service. We believe that this summary does justice both to the guidelines of Report 44 (1973) as adopted by Synod 1973 and to the framework within which Synod 1973 declared that the report and the conclusions should be understood. Our discussion of ordination and office is not, of course, an exhaustive teaching on these matters but only a focused discussion clarifying key issues which arise from the 1973 decisions and which are significant for the issues contained in our mandate.

III. "Official acts of ministry"

Though the phrase "official acts of ministry" is contained in Church Order Article 53-b, the phrase has never been defined either by the Church Order or by synodical action. Instead, it functions as a traditional phrase which by common consent refers to the following actions:

- – The administration of the sacraments.
- – The pronouncement of the greeting and the benediction in the worship service.
- – The installation of officebearers.
- – The reception into full membership of the church and the excommunication from the fellowship of the church.

Though persons licensed to exhort or persons appointed by a consistory to read a sermon may conduct worship services, such persons are not permitted to perform the "official acts of ministry" (Church Order Art. 53). Instead, these have been considered to be actions appropriate only to the office of the ordained minister of the Word. The reason for this belief is nowhere officially stated, but the traditional rationale is clearly given by Van Dellen and Monsma in the *Revised Church Order Commentary:* "These matters all stand related— some more, others less—to the official proclamation of the Word. And the ordained minister only is authorized in God's providence to herald and proclaim His Word with authority as His representative" (p. 208). Thus, central to the tradition is the belief that these acts require the authorization bestowed by ordination, by virtue of which a person both speaks on behalf of Christ and represents Christ to the congregation. These actions are all liturgical acts, and in the worship service the ordained minister of the Word is the person who liturgically speaks for and represents Christ to the congregation. Thus, normally these are actions that would be performed by the ordained minister of the Word. Such an understanding is eminently fitting and appropriate.

However, is the tradition correct in restricting these official acts to the office of the minister of the Word? Van Dellen and Monsma acknowledge a difference among these various acts: Some are more related to the official proclamation of the Word, and others, less. It seems that receiving into membership and excommunication are actions less related. While these actions are related indeed to the recipient's relationship to the Word in faith and life, these actions

themselves are essentially official acts performed by the consistory, and in the liturgy the minister of the Word only communicates an action already taken by the consistory. Though the official character of this action should be preserved, there appears to be no essential reason why an ordained elder could not perform this action in the worship service. It is similarly the case with the installation of officebearers. Though this is an official act appropriately performed by the minister of the Word, there is no essential reason why it could not be performed by an ordained elder. Ordained elders also officially represent Christ and participate in the ordination of fellow officebearers.

Though there has been some discussion about the essential nature of the greeting and the benediction, the tradition has held that these are declarative, performatory actions. In accordance with this understanding, there is good liturgical reason for restricting these performatory actions to one who officially represents Christ to the congregation. Other persons who do not have this official status turn the greeting and the benediction into a prayer of request. The committee observes that the declaration of pardon in the liturgy, though not traditionally listed as an official act of worship, has a status comparable to that of the greeting/benediction. Again, there has been a discussion whether this liturgical act is declarative/performatory or only evangelical in character. If the former, it would be an "official act"; if the latter, it would not be. The more recent tradition has tended to side with the latter.

The tradition has a clear answer regarding who should administer the sacraments. Since the sacraments are also a form of the Word and since the ordained minister of the Word is the only one authorized to proclaim that Word with authority as Christ's representative, the ordained minister of the Word is necessarily the only one authorized to administer the sacraments. As a norm we think this position is valid.

However, there are practical problems that arise from restricting the administration of the sacraments exclusively to the office of the ordained minister of the Word. What happens in a congregation when ordained ministers are not readily available? Is a congregation not entitled to the sacraments as a means of grace? If provisions may be made for proclamation of the Word apart from ordination, may it be similarly permissible to make provision for the administration of the sacraments apart from ordination? If so, should such provision be made?

One of the 1973 guidelines states, "There is no valid biblical or doctrinal reason why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also be appointed to administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63). This guideline entails the assumption that the consistory has the authority to provide for the church that which is essential for its spiritual well-being. However, since we live within a denominational covenant, we have agreed to follow certain regulations for licensure to exhort. The question we face is whether licensure to exhort should automatically carry with it the right for a person to administer the sacraments or whether such persons may be appointed if and when a consistory judges that it is necessary for the spiritual well-being of the congregation that the sacrament should be administered.

Why this hesitation? Because licensure to exhort is not ordination. Even though we sometimes humorously debate how it can be that two things that look and sound the same are not the same, exhorting and preaching are in fact not identical. It is our hope that the variation is not noticeably great in form or

content, but the liturgical status is different. The exhorter functions out of the universal office of believer and has authority appropriate to it, but the exhorter is not the person officially authorized to represent Christ in the liturgy. Thus preaching and administration of the sacraments belong naturally and appropriately as official acts to the ordained minister of the Word. In times of special need or special circumstances, the one appointed to bring the Word may also be appointed to administer the sacraments. However, since elders qualify to be appointed to read sermons, there seems little reason why elders may not be appointed to administer the sacraments, which closely follow prescribed forms. Elders have the advantage of being ordained persons who represent Christ to the congregation, even though preaching the Word and administering the sacraments are not a normal part of their official task. Traditionally we have held that the presence of elders is essential to calling an official worship service. Perhaps, then, a good case can be made for appointing an elder to administer the sacraments in circumstances of special need, possibly an even better case than can be made for appointing a person licensed to exhort.

IV. Classis Red Mesa

Classis Red Mesa presents the denomination with a case of special need that may well prove to be permanent for the foreseeable future. Presently there is a shortage of ordained ministers to accommodate the need for administering the sacraments. Many churches in the classis seem to be moving toward bivocational ministers, persons who have a paying job in addition to doing pastoral work in a congregation. As of June 1998, eight gifted men have been licensed by classis to exhort, and they minister in seven congregations. It is believed that these organized churches which have moved to bivocational ministries may never return to calling regularly ordained, full-time pastors. Consequently, Classis Red Mesa overtured Synod 1995 to change Church Order Article 55 to read as follows: "The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory, in the public worship service, *by those who have been properly authorized to bring the Word*, with the use of the prescribed forms" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 330). Synod withheld action on this overture but permitted Classis Red Mesa a three-year exception to Church Order Article 55, "thereby allowing those who have been authorized to preach or exhort also to administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 745). Synod 1998 extended the exception for one year, awaiting the report of this committee.

One ground for Classis Red Mesa's overture was one of the guidelines adopted by Synod 1973, which stated, "there are no valid biblical or doctrinal reasons why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63). But how should this declaration be understood? The language no longer distinguishes between licensure to exhort and ordination because in the decisions of 1973 ordination is called appointment. However, since the word "may" is used in connection with administering the sacraments, it seems clear that the declaration has in mind not ordained pastors but those licensed to exhort or appointed to read a sermon. Does licensure to exhort automatically include licensure to administer the sacraments? Or is it rather a case of special permission granted by a consistory (or classis) under special circumstances? We think it should be the latter for the reasons stated earlier.

What about the specific needs of Classis Red Mesa? Though it may be possible for a consistory and/or a classis to appoint a person licensed to exhort also to administer the sacraments, we think this is not the best arrangement on a permanent basis. Since the need may be permanent, we suggest some arrangement that includes ordination as elder. If the licensed exhorters of Classis Red Mesa are in fact part-time pastors of specific organized churches and if such churches are in fact financially incapable of supporting a full-time ordained pastor, we believe it best that the licensed exhorter first be ordained as an elder and in that ordained capacity preach and administer the sacraments. If bivocational ministry in a specific organized church continues to be necessary, after some time of having proved him- or herself, the licensed exhorter (and ordained elder) could be considered eligible for regular ordination as a pastor under Church Order Article 7—even though the bivocational ministry continues. While the church continues to believe that full-time service is normally a concomitant of ordination to the ministry of the Word and sacraments, Church Order Article 15 allows bivocational ministries by way of exception and with the approval of classis.

V. Youth pastors and ordination

The question of the status and ordination of youth pastors came officially before synod in the report of the Youth-Ministry Committee in 1995. This committee declared that it "favors opening ordination to youth pastors by way of some pathway to ordination besides the master of divinity degree" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 205).

In support of its position the Youth-Ministry Committee pointed to the increasing number of specially trained persons serving the church in specialized ministries, to the existence of special master of arts degree programs at Calvin Theological Seminary as well as programs at Reformed Bible College and other Reformed colleges, to the action of the Reformed Church in America in amending the *Book of Church Order* in 1992 to accommodate "associates in ministry and ministers of education," and to our own ordaining of evangelists to function both outside of and within organized churches in a specialized capacity. Assuming in the light of the synodical decision of 1973 that the number of offices is not fixed and that Scripture allows "the church to adapt or modify its particular ministries in order to carry out effectively its service to Christ" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 64), the Youth-Ministry Committee thought that the ordination of youth pastors was both possible and necessary. However, since such a recommendation exceeded the scope of its mandate, this committee recommended that synod appoint a study committee to consider the issues involved in ordaining to office youth pastors and persons in other specialized ministries.

The Youth-Ministry Committee was responding in part to the feelings expressed by persons working in youth ministry. Although these persons are engaged in the official work of a church under the supervision of the council of that church, they lack official status. Like the work of an evangelist, their work has a special focus, for which they are especially gifted and have been specifically trained. However, even though the tasks they perform were traditionally the work of the ministers of the Word and/or elders, these persons working in youth ministry labor without official recognition and the status that comes with ordination to office. Though it is possible to think of status subjectively in

terms of dominance and privilege, as did the 1973 report on ordination, that is not the only interpretation of status. When youth pastors express, as part of their concern, their lack of status, they mean that objectively they have no official standing in the congregation; that often their role, their teaching and counsel, is treated as that of a private person; and that they are not viewed as official representatives of or spokespersons on behalf of Christ.

In our earlier discussion of ordination, we argued that, in the light of the framework in which Synod 1973 placed the adopted guidelines of the report on ordination, it is necessary to reintroduce a positive concept of status into our thinking about office. The status of office is precisely that of being an official representative of Christ to the congregation. As such, status implies both an authorization to exercise certain duties as well as an accountability for the exercise of these duties of office. The difficulty of thinking about office merely as function is an inability to know what functions should or should not be considered appropriate to an ordainable office. On the basis of our Reformed understanding of calling/vocation, coupled with our understanding of the universal office of believer, one begins to wonder why every function of the church as institute and as organism should not be ordainable. Thus, to prevent an unhelpful and unnecessary proliferation of offices, we believe that the positive concept of office as status, mentioned above, is essential.

Closely related to this concept of office as representing Christ to the congregation is an awareness of the threefold office of Christ himself. While some may no longer make use of this traditional view of office because it seems to restrict the number of offices to three, we have argued that the one threefold office of Christ is not so much a matter of number as it is a matter of essence. Traditionally, the three offices of minister of the Word, elder, and deacon have been considered essential because each reflects especially one aspect of Christ's threefold office (proclamatory, supervisory, pastoral), even though each of the offices also participates to some degree in the characteristics and tasks of the other offices. We believe that any theological reflection about office must be shaped by this one threefold office of Christ.

In other words, if one is to argue cogently for another office, it is necessary to demonstrate that this office is directly related to the one threefold office of Christ, while in its functioning (its tasks and/or qualifications) it is sufficiently distinct from the other offices. Essentially this is how synod reasoned in establishing the office of evangelist. While granting that the evangelist and the minister of the Word have considerable similarity in tasks and function and that elders also are mandated along with the ministers of the Word to participate in and promote evangelism, synod decided to create a fourth office. It did so primarily because the qualifications established for the office of evangelist are not the same as those for the minister of the Word and because the focus of the evangelist's work is more restricted and more specific than that of the two offices to which the work of the evangelist is closely associated. Thus the focus of the office of evangelist was considered to be sufficiently distinct as to warrant a distinct office. Yet, as is the case with ministers of the Word, the ordained evangelist by virtue of office is also to be acknowledged as an elder and thus to function within the established governing structure of the church.

To a large degree our thinking about the possible ordination of youth pastors has been influenced by synod's reasoning in creating the office of

evangelist. The parallels are quite compelling. As in the case of the evangelist, the work of a youth pastor is to a large extent what has been traditionally considered to be part of the task of the minister of the Word: teaching, counseling, administering programs. Yet because the educational qualifications for becoming a youth pastor do not meet the church's established qualifications for the office of minister of the Word, it is not possible to ordain youth pastors to that office. Similarly, there is some relationship between the task of a youth pastor and that of an elder, seen perhaps most pointedly in the practice of some churches in appointing youth elders. Yet the work of a youth pastor is more extensive than that usually associated with the elder, and it has a distinct focus. However, since the tasks of a youth pastor are so closely associated with two of the traditional offices, it is easy to see their close connection to the one threefold office of Christ. Because of historical development and the need for special ministry to youth and others on the one hand and the availability of persons specially gifted and trained to meet that ministry need on the other, it is certainly permissible for the church to declare that that ministry is best served by a specific office, by an official representative of Christ to function in that area of ministry.

The recent expansion of Church Order Articles 63 and 64 is evidence of the church's sensitivity to the need for this ministry. What formerly was entitled "Catechetical Instruction" is now called "Faith Nurture." Article 63 reads as follows:

> a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.
> b. Each church shall instruct the youth in the Scriptures and in the creeds and the confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.

It is interesting to note that, before the revision took place, catechetical instruction was assigned primarily to the minister of the Word with the help of elders and others appointed by the consistory if necessary. Now it is simply the task of the church under the supervision of the consistory, evidence perhaps that the official work is now often performed by persons not holding office.

The content of the present Article 64 is new. Not only is faith nurture necessary for the youth; it is also important for adults. Article 64 reads as follows:

> a. Each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, and to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers.
> b. Each church shall provide opportunities for continued instruction of adult members. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.

Thus Church Order Articles 63 and 64 are concrete evidence of the church's awareness of the need for educational ministries and faith nurture. The need is broader than youth ministry. Though the categories of youth ministry and youth pastor may be appropriate and accurate for certain situations, often the

tasks assigned include a broader ministry. Thus we believe that it may be better officially to designate the office as minister of education and to allow the calling church to define its parameters. If office is narrowly defined in terms of youth, adults, singles, etc., there will be a needless expansion of function-specific offices. We believe that *minister of education* should be the category that designates the office, which then in its functioning can be shaped by local need. If synod should move in this direction, there would then be, in addition to the traditional three offices, two offices shaped by particular needs and focused on special ministries: the minister of evangelism, engaged in outreach and/or in equipping fellow believers to participate in the work of evangelism (Church Order Arts. 23 and 24), and the minister of education, engaged in nurturing the faith of believers and any others who wish to participate (both youth and adult) and equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world.

The Reformed Church in America has responded to the same needs in a somewhat different way. We, as they, will propose a category of *associate in ministry*, which certifies persons as competent to teach and give leadership in the church's educational ministries but does not issue in ordination to office. The RCA, however, restricts ordination to those who are ordained to the office of the minister of the Word and sacraments. Such an ordained minister of the Word—if gifts, training, and experience satisfy the qualifications—may also be certified as a minister of Christian education. The RCA has not been influenced by the kind of decisions rendered by our Synod 1973, which opened the way for increasing the number of (ordainable) offices.

VI. Proposal regarding persons in the educational ministries of the churches

We recognize, of course, that churches may hire whomever they will to assist in their educational ministries. However, in the light of synod's decisions about and our continuing reflection on the nature of office and ordination and in the light of increasing specialization in the educational ministries of the church, we believe it would be helpful both for regulating and improving the church's educational ministry for synod to consider the following proposal. Because of the great variety of educational backgrounds of persons employed in and appointed to direct the educational ministry of congregations, it is necessary to propose two distinct categories:

A. Associate in educational ministry

An *associate in educational ministry* refers to an unordained, denominationally recognized position open to persons who have proven their effectiveness and leadership in the church's educational and youth ministries but who do not meet the requirements for ordination as a minister of education. These persons, if they meet the requirements and are recommended by their councils, will be examined by classis and, if the examination is sustained, will be certified as associates in educational ministry.

A candidate for this position must

1. Be a confessing member in good standing of a Christian Reformed congregation.

2. Give evidence of a mature Christian life-style with qualities of spiritual depth, leadership, and effectiveness in interpersonal relationships.

3. Have successfully completed eighteen months of demonstrated competence in youth/educational ministries in a Christian Reformed church under the supervision of the council. Upon this council's recommendation, the candidate will be examined by classis.

4. Provide evidence of having completed five Continuing Education Units (one CEU equals ten hours of training) in educational ministry (training by organizations such as Youth Unlimited, CRC teacher training, Children in Worship training, youth specialties, SonLife, Native Youth Ministries, etc.).

5. Have an invitation or call to serve a CRC congregation in a youth/educational ministry on at least a half-time basis.

6. Sustain a classical examination (after the eighteen-month period) which will inquire into the candidate's

   a. Christian character, life, and spiritual maturity.
   b. Sense of calling to the teaching ministry of the church.
   c. Knowledge of Scripture and Reformed doctrine.
   d. Gifts for youth/educational ministry.
   e. Understanding of issues in youth/educational ministry and in faith development.

After successfully completing this examination, the candidate will receive classical credentials declaring that the candidate has been officially certified as an associate in educational ministry. An appropriate commissioning service in the congregation should follow. Official acts of ministry do not inhere in this position.

B. *Minister of education*

Minister of education designates an ordained denominational office, the duties of which are to supervise and be engaged in the church's nurturing ministry to its youth and to its adult members. This office is open to a person who has

1. Completed an M.A. degree in youth/educational ministry from Calvin Theological Seminary or an equivalent degree from an accredited college or seminary.

2. Received a call to serve a Christian Reformed congregation in a youth/educational ministry, usually on a full-time basis.

3. Sustained a classical examination (with synodical deputies present) that would assess the candidate's

   a. Christian character, life, and spiritual maturity.
   b. Gifts for and competence in the church's educational and pastoral ministries.
   c. Sense of calling to the educational ministry of the church.
   d. Knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, Reformed doctrine and the creeds, CRC history and its current missions and ministries, faith nurture, and his/her philosophy of Christian religious education.
   e. Ability to apply this knowledge to the practice of ministry.

After successfully sustaining a classical examination, the candidate would be ordained to the office of minister of education by the calling church. By

virtue of ordination the minister of education would be accepted also as an elder in the local church (as is the case with the fourth office and the office of the minister of the Word). This ordination would be valid for the duration of the person's active engagement in educational ministry in the CRC. Ordination to this office would include the following "official acts of ministry" and privileges:

– The giving of the salutation and benediction when leading worship services.
– Receiving persons into the membership of the church through profession of faith.
– Officiating at marriage ceremonies.
– Entrance into the denominational pension and medical plans.

Why should only these acts be attached to this office? Why not all the official acts associated with the office of the minister of the Word? First, it must be noted that this fifth office is not to be viewed as a shortcut to or stepping stone for the office of minister of the Word. The requirements for the latter office are considerably more, pertaining especially to a more thorough grounding in theology, in exegesis, and in the proclamation of the Word (homiletics). If these requirements were added to those for this fifth office, the need for the fifth office would disappear. Then there could be simply the office of the minister of the Word with some persons entering that office who have concentrated during their training on educational ministry. (This would be identical to RCA practice.) The reason for a limited number of "official acts" lies in the fact that the fifth office has its own restricted focus, with actions pertaining particularly to that focus. Preaching of the Word is not an inherent function of this office, and the requirements for admission to this office do not assume that it is. We recognize that some persons entering this office may be gifted for preaching, and if classis sees a need, it may, upon examination, license such a person to preach (exhort). But this is a distinct classical action that does not flow automatically from the focused nature of the fifth office.

Second, as already indicated above, the actions and privileges attached to this office are essentially related to the tasks and nature of this office. We have argued that the salutation and benediction as declarations are made by persons who officially represent Christ to the congregation. The fifth office has that status. Since the work of the fifth office is to a large degree that of preparing persons for membership in the church, acceptance into membership is an official liturgical act closely related to this office. There is, then, no reason why a minister of education should not function in this capacity. The question concerning who may officiate at weddings is regulated by civil governments, which normally accept persons designated by the churches. Since the official task of the minister of education also involves teaching and counseling with a view to marriage, it seems only right to attach this privilege to this office. Finally, since this office is usually a full-time ministry, entrance into the denominational pension and medical plans seems right and necessary.

VII. Concluding observations

Our report began with a discussion of ordination and office as background for discussing and making recommendations concerning the specific issues in our mandate. We have emphasized that office or ministry is rooted in the

power and authority of Christ, that a person placed in office is authorized to administer that authority in loving service in the spirit of Christ, and that, consequently, such a person represents Christ to the congregation. Because office as ministry administers Christ's authority, we believe it helpful to relate office to Christ's threefold office not as a restriction on the number of specific offices but as an insight into the essence of all ecclesiastical offices. This relationship to Christ's authority entails a concept of office that includes status, for office exists outside a person and is not warranted by or rooted in a person's subjective qualifications. Office is a reality into which one enters and by which one is both authorized to perform certain duties on behalf of Christ and held accountable for an appropriate administration of Christ's authority. Office or ministry is not about dominance or privilege, but it is about loving service on Christ's behalf. We believe that this understanding of ordination and office is either explicitly stated by or is implicit in the decisions of Synod 1973. Consequently, we will not ask synod to adopt any new recommendations or guidelines concerning the theological understanding of office and ordination.

The traditional "official acts of ministry" are directly related to office and ordination. Even though there is no official teaching on these matters, the tradition has related these acts directly or indirectly to the office of the minister of the Word. We do not find that position completely convincing and have introduced a slightly different understanding of these "official acts." However, our interpretation fits well into a Reformed understanding of the worship service. We have argued that these acts are essentially liturgical acts performed by persons duly authorized to represent Christ to the congregation. Though some of these acts flow directly from the office of the minister of the Word (i.e., preaching the Word and administering the sacraments) and all of these acts are appropriate to the liturgical function of that office in the worship service, some of these official acts are less directly tied to that office and may be performed by an ordained elder (e.g., receiving into membership, excommunication, installation of officebearers). Further, we believe that the council holds within itself the authority to authorize and carry out official worship services and that, if no minister of the Word is available, the council may authorize an ordained elder to perform whatever "official acts of ministry" are necessary for the spiritual well-being of the congregation. We believe that this understanding provides an approach for all emergency situations caused by the unavailability of ordained ministers of the Word in a given setting, including the situation in Classis Red Mesa.

Questions about the structure of the educational ministry of the church also involve questions about office and ordination and the "official acts of ministry." In the broad arena of persons serving the church in educational ministry—from interested congregational members, to part-time gifted and/or trained hired persons, to full-time staff persons—we propose to introduce two special categories. In order to regulate and improve our educational ministry, we recommend a nonordained but denominationally recognized position called **associate in educational ministry,** and for those persons gifted and fully trained in educational ministry, we recommend the creation of a fifth office, called **minister of education.** This office has a special focus, with ordination restricted to that focus.

We are not certain that we have handled everything our mandate included, for its scope is wide. It is not limited to how "official acts of ministry" apply to youth pastors, a matter we have handled, but also to persons in other specialized ministries. Who these are and what their needs may be for official recognition are not mentioned. Unofficially a question about the status of lay chaplains was voiced. We are not sufficiently acquainted with the issues involved to render advice. It is possible, if official credentialing is necessary for the functioning of lay chaplains, that a process similar to that proposed for an associate in educational ministry could be followed and that a similar title could be used. But since we have not addressed the issue, we make no recommendation. Instead, we leave it to the initiative of the appropriate boards or standing committees or agencies to initiate whatever actions on these matters they judge necessary.

Adopting the recommendations that follow will necessitate significant amendments to the Church Order. We have added specific recommendations that would implement the broader plan in more specific ways. Since we judge these to be "substantial alterations" (Church Order Art. 47) in our church polity, we have framed the recommendations so that these changes are being proposed to Synod 1999 and, if agreed to, will be placed before Synod 2000 for final adoption. We also ask that if these changes are in fact proposed by synod for later adoption, the same persons who defend them for proposal at Synod 1999 also be allowed to defend them for adoption at Synod 2000 (cf. Church Order Supplement, Art. 47, Regulation e).

Within the wide scope of our mandate we wish to make a final comment. Since our thinking about the ordination of youth pastors was influenced by synod's thinking about ordaining evangelists, we have closely reexamined the synodical materials. It is our judgment that perhaps the time has come for synod to reexamine the requirements for the office of evangelist. Acknowledging the necessity in the 1970s to make it possible for existing evangelists to be placed in office, acknowledging the church's right at any time to place gifted persons in office even though they lack certain requirements usually demanded, and recognizing that evangelists may now also work within established congregations, we believe the time is right for synod to reexamine the educational requirements for the office of evangelist. Education cannot replace giftedness, but it can assist the better functioning of the office.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Ruth Hofman, Dr. David Holwerda, and Rev. Jack Vos be given the privilege of the floor when this report is being discussed.

B. That synod adopt the following as guidelines for understanding the nature and practice of the traditional "official acts of ministry":

1. The "official acts of ministry" are essentially liturgical acts performed by persons who, by virtue of their office, function as representatives of Christ to the congregation.

2. Since the minister of the Word is by virtue of office the liturgically designated representative of Christ, all "official acts of ministry" belong naturally to this office.

3. Several "official acts of ministry" which reflect actions of the consistory may be performed liturgically by an ordained elder.

4. Since the council holds ultimate responsibility for the calling and functioning of the worship service, in case of significant need or an emergency situation the council may authorize an ordained elder to perform all the "official acts of ministry" essential to the worship service. Should the need continue, an arrangement approved by classis must be sought.

C. That synod recommend that the licensed exhorters in Classis Red Mesa who function as bivocational pastors of organized churches be ordained as elders and in that capacity perform the "official acts of ministry."

    Grounds:
1. Certain congregations in Classis Red Mesa face situations which fit the conditions of need and/or emergency situation mentioned in Recommendation B, 4.
2. This will make available the means of grace to which every congregation is regularly entitled.

D. Recommendations regarding new nonordained position: associate in educational ministry

1. That synod approve the establishment of a nonordained denominationally recognized position called associate in educational ministry.

    Grounds:
    a. This is an efficient way to regulate and improve the church's educational ministry.
    b. This is an important recognition of persons hired to perform significant ministry (Church Order Arts. 63 and 64) on a regular basis.

2. That synod approve the following requirements for certifying an associate in educational ministry. An associate in educational ministry must

    a. Be a confessing member in good standing of a Christian Reformed congregation.

    b. Give evidence of a mature Christian life-style with qualities of spiritual depth, leadership, and effectiveness in interpersonal relationships.

    c. Have completed successfully eighteen months of demonstrated competence in youth/educational ministries in a CRC under the supervision of the council. Upon this council's recommendation, the candidate will be examined by classis.

    d. Provide evidence of having completed five Continuing Education Units (one CEU equals ten hours of training) in educational ministry (training by organizations such as Youth Unlimited, CRC teacher training, Children in Worship training, youth specialties, SonLife, Native Youth Ministries, etc.

    e. Have an invitation or call to serve a Christian Reformed congregation in a youth/educational ministry on at least a half-time basis.

    f. Sustain a classical examination (after the eighteen-month period) which will inquire into the candidate's

1) Christian character, life, and spiritual maturity.
2) Sense of calling to the teaching ministry of the church.
3) Knowledge of Scripture and Reformed doctrine.
4) Gifts for youth/educational ministry.
5) Understanding of issues in youth/educational ministry and in faith development.

E. Recommendations regarding a fifth office: minister of education

1. That synod establish as a fifth office, the minister of education.

   Grounds:
   a. The need for special ministry in this area has been acknowledged by synod in the revision of Church Order Articles 63 and 64, by the Youth-Ministry Committee, and by other denominations.
   b. The work performed by youth pastors/ministers of education was formerly part of the tasks assigned to the offices of the minister of the Word and elder.
   c. The focus of this office is more limited than that of minister of the Word and elder.
   d. The qualifications for office and/or requirements for entrance into this office are different from those established for the minister of the Word.
   e. The grounds listed above with their emphasis on need, special focus, and requirements for entrance are identical to the grounds and arguments used to establish the office of evangelist.

2. That synod approve the following requirements for and procedures for admission to the office of minister of education. A minister of education must

   a. Possess an M.A. degree in educational ministry from Calvin Theological Seminary or an equivalent degree from an accredited college or seminary.

   b. Have a call to serve a Christian Reformed congregation in a youth/educational ministry, usually on a full-time basis.

   c. Sustain a classical examination (with synodical deputies present) that would assess the candidate's

      1) Christian character, life, and spiritual maturity.
      2) Gifts for and competence in the church's educational and pastoral ministries.
      3) Sense of calling to the educational ministry of the church.
      4) Knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, Reformed doctrine and the creeds, CRC history and its current missions and ministries, faith nurture, and his/her philosophy of Christian religious education.
      5) Ability to apply this knowledge to the practice of ministry.

3. That synod agree that the following "official acts of ministry" and privileges are appropriate to the office of minister of education:

   a. The giving of the salutation and benediction when leading worship services.

b. Receiving persons into the membership of the church through profession of faith.

c. Officiating at marriage ceremonies.

d. Entrance into the denominational pension and medical plans.

Grounds:

1) These acts fit the limited focus of the office of minister of education.
2) The qualifications for this office are not identical to those for the office of minister of the Word.

F. That synod propose the following amendments to the Church Order (changes indicated by underlining).

1. Article 2

   The church recognizes the offices of minister of the Word, elder, deacon, minister of education, and evangelist. These offices differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor.

2. Article 3-a

   a. Confessing male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister of the Word, elder, minister of education, and evangelist.

   Supplement, Article 3-a, Section A

   A. Classis may, in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative, and authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister of the Word, minister of education, and evangelist.

3. Article 3-b

   a. All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of deacon and minister of education.

4. Heading after Article 22

   C. The Ministers of Education

5. New Article 23

   a. The task of the minister of education is to supervise and be engaged in the church's nurturing ministry to its youth and to its adult members.

   b. The minister of education shall function under the direct supervision of the consistory, giving regular reports to it and being present at its meetings whenever possible, particularly when his/her work is under consideration.

   (Cf. Supplement, Article 23

6. Current heading "C. The Evangelists" follows new Article 23 and becomes "D. The Evangelists." Current Articles 23-86 become 24-87. Current heading "D. The Elders and Deacons" following (old) 24 (new 25) becomes "E. The Elders and Deacons."

7. Article (old) 55 (new 56)

The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory in the public worship service, by the minister of the Word, with the use of the prescribed forms or adaptations of them which conform to synodical guidelines. In case of emergency or classically defined need, elders designated by the consistory to conduct worship services or ordained evangelists may administer the sacraments.

8. Article (old) 69-c (new 70-c)

c. Ministers of the Word, ministers of education, and evangelists shall not solemnize marriages which would be in conflict with the Word of God.

G. That synod adopt the following changes to the Church Order Supplements to be included there by the general secretary if the above amendments to the Church Order are adopted by Synod 2000:

1. Supplement, Article (new) 23

The following requirements and procedures apply for admission to the office of minister of education. A minister of education must

a. Possess an M.A. degree in educational ministry from Calvin Theological Seminary or an equivalent degree from an accredited college or seminary.

b. Have a call to serve a Christian Reformed congregation in a youth/educational ministry, usually on a full-time basis.

c. Sustain a classical examination that assesses the candidate's

1) Christian character, life, and spiritual maturity.
2) Gifts for and competence in the church's educational and pastoral ministries.
3) Sense of calling to the educational ministry of the church.
4) Knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, Reformed doctrine and the creeds, CRC history and its current missions and ministries, faith nurture, and philosophy of Christian religious education.
5) Ability to apply this knowledge to the practice of ministry.

The action of classis with respect to the examination shall require the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

2. Supplement, Article (old) 53 (new 54), replacing the current material

The official acts of the ministry are

a. The administration of the sacraments.
b. The pronouncement of the greeting and the benediction.
c. The installation of officebearers.
d. The reception into communicant/full membership in the church.
e. The exclusion from membership in the church.

In case of emergency or classically defined need, elders designated by the consistory to conduct worship services may perform the official acts of ministry.

The minister of education may perform the following two official acts of the ministry:

a. The pronouncement of the greeting and the benediction when leading worship services.
b. The reception into communicant/full membership in the church.

3. Supplement, Articles (old) 63 and 64 (new 64 and 65)

Synod approved the establishment of a nonordained denominationally recognized position called an associate in educational ministry.

Synod approved the following requirements for certifying an associate in educational ministry. The associate in educational ministry must

a. Be a confessing member in good standing of a Christian Reformed congregation.
b. Give evidence of a mature Christian life-style with qualities of spiritual depth, leadership, and effectiveness in interpersonal relationships.
c. Have completed successfully eighteen months of demonstrated competence in youth/educational ministries in a Christian Reformed church under the supervision of the consistory.
d. Be examined by classis upon this consistory's recommendation.
e. Provide evidence of having completed five Continuing Education Units (one CEU equals ten hours of training) in educational ministry (training by organizations such as Youth Unlimited, CRC teacher training, Children in Worship training, youth specialties, SonLife, Native Youth Ministries, etc.
f. Have an invitation or call to serve a Christian Reformed congregation in a youth/educational ministry on at least a half-time basis.
g. Sustain a classical examination (after the eighteen-month period) which will inquire into the candidate's

   1) Christian character, life, and spiritual maturity.
   2) Sense of calling to the teaching ministry of the church.
   3) Knowledge of Scripture and Reformed doctrine.
   4) Gifts for youth/educational ministry.
   5) Understanding of issues in youth/educational ministry and in faith development.

4. Supplement, Article (old) 69 (new 70)

The minister of education has the privilege of officiating at marriage ceremonies if state or provincial law allows for it.

H. That synod designate Rev. Ruth Hofman, Dr. David Holwerda, and Rev. Jack Vos as those who will represent the proposed changes to Synod 2000.

I. That synod make provision for a review and update of the position, qualifications, and functioning of the office of evangelist (*Acts of Synod 1973,* Art. 64; Church Order Art. 24; *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 489).

   Grounds:
   1. The present position description is in effect as broad as that of the minister of the Word and appears to include the normal administration of the sacraments in an organized church.

2. There is an inadequate specification of the requirements for this office (for example, no distinction between those who have extensive training and those who do not).
3. There appear to be inadequate provisions for internship/residency.
4. There is no provision for transferring credentials from one classis to another.

J. That synod declare the committee's assignment completed and discharge the committee.

> Committee to Study Ordination and
> "Official Acts of Ministry"
> > Robert C. De Vries, chair
> > Herb De Ruyter
> > Ruth Hofman
> > David Holwerda, reporter
> > Stanley Jim
> > Jack B. Vos

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I. Summary overview

The Christian Reformed Church as a denomination has been blessed by God in many, many ways. Effective and well-supported agencies and committees have developed over the years to promote, enhance, support, and extend ministry in the United States, in Canada, and throughout the world.

Over the years an organizational structure has evolved with the express purpose of enabling the Christian Reformed Church to carry out its ministry at both the local and denominational levels. As priorities and opportunities for ministry have changed over time, the denomination's organizational structures have been periodically altered to fit the current needs.

Synod 1996 appointed the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the United States (U.S. Structure Committee) to "present to Synod 1998 or 1999 a proposal for an effective structure for enhancing the ministry of our churches (including agency structure for achieving effective ministry in the U.S.)." This action was partially a response to the anticipation that a similar committee studying the Canadian CRC structure would probably propose changes which would affect the entire denomination. The Canadian structure report, approved by Synod 1997, recommended significant changes. This report by the U.S. Structure Committee expands that foundation and suggests modifications to serve the whole denomination.

The U.S. Structure Committee sends this report to synod in response to its mandate. In conducting its work, the committee sought a wide spectrum of input by engaging in dialogue with classes, executive directors and boards of agencies, the current Ministries Coordinating Council, diaconal representatives, Calvin Theological Seminary's faculty and board, the Calvin College Board of Trustees, Canadian representatives, and five other denominations that are also assessing their current structures. This dialogue significantly influenced the committee to set two primary goals: namely, decentralizing ministry responsibility and simplifying governance structures.

On the basis of this input and after extensive discussions, the committee embraced the following ideas, which underlie its work:

A. Organizational structure, which can enhance or hinder any organization, must serve the CRC as an arm of Christ's church. The structure in use should support the theology, mission, and vision of the denomination and should enhance the denomination's effectiveness. What is appropriate and effective for another type of organization may not necessarily be appropriate and effective for the CRC as part of Christ's body. Administrative and governance structures should first and foremost be shaped to serve the church as church.

B. The organizational structure of the CRC must be based on Reformed polity. What is appropriate for another denomination will not necessarily fit the CRC because we are a denomination which formally embraces a particular set of creeds and confessions and a particular body of theology. Our creeds, confessions, and theology should be honored in the structure adopted to carry out our ministry.

C. Organizational change is an ongoing process and can be healthy if it reflects changes in ministry vision. The organizational structure of the CRC has been changing, especially since the "Vision 21" report of 1987. The Board of Trustees, the executive director of ministries, the Canadian ministries director, and the Ministries Coordinating Council are examples of structural changes in the past ten years, as is the consolidation of five agencies into the recently formed Pastoral Ministries agency.

D. All other denominations reviewed are also seeking to implement changes that will enhance delivery and effectiveness in ministry while continuing to hold their theology and values. In all cases there is concern about a perceived distance between the members of the local churches and the denominational ministries. However, these denominations also recognize the potential of new communication technologies both to enhance communication and to allow changes in church organization. One of the key goals, in the CRC and elsewhere, is to diminish significantly the perception/reality of distance between members and ministries.

E. As a denomination fully committed to a vision and to goals by which to serve Christ (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 45ff.), we need to have a structure which delivers these benefits to *all* members of our churches. Changing the structure to support future ministry will involve denomination-wide personal and organizational growth. Therefore, it requires a good understanding of our increasingly diverse membership, of the need for change, and of the potential inherent in the changes being proposed.

F. The amount of structural change to be attempted at any given point in time must be carefully assessed. Although we hold common beliefs and confessions, the denomination is made up of believers with differing degrees of ministry involvement and differing capacities for change. This means that structural changes must take into account a wide range of viewpoints and should proceed at a pace which the church can absorb.

In considering possible changes, the committee placed its heaviest weight on the first two principles noted above: The structure of the CRC must honor the nature of this denomination and be consistent with Reformed polity. Yet the committee also recognized that an organization with as many ministries and member relationships as the CRC has cannot simply start over. Rather, the committee needed to appreciate how the CRC has been blessed in its journey to date and how, using the gifts it has been given, the CRC can minister more effectively in the future. Thus, the recommendations of the committee should be viewed as next steps in the CRC's organizational journey. The following recommendations contain what the committee believes to be a manageable amount of change that will improve the future ministry of the church while building on its history.

II.   A summary of the major proposals in this report

A.   Each classis should develop a classical ministries committee (CMC) (pp. 328-30*).*
Establishment of classical ministries committees will encourage each classis to develop a ministry vision and a ministry plan. Not only will this enhance local ministry, but the denomination will benefit from this input in developing denomination-wide ministry plans. Such communication should bring the local church, classes, and denominational ministries into greater alignment. It will also assist synod and the Board of Trustees in evaluating agency ministry plans and priorities.

B.   A new concept of regional ministry development should be tested (pp. 330-33).

1. Field structures of the various North American ministries need to become more integrated among the agencies. A system in which each agency uses different geographic boundaries in determining regional field structure is not helpful to integrated planning and ministry. From our discussions and from input from many sources, we have concluded that local ministries would benefit if the field personnel of the various agencies would work together. Therefore, the committee recommends that, to facilitate cooperation, synod require the Board of Trustees to establish common geographic regions within which all agencies of the church will conduct their work.

2. The committee also recommends the establishment of two U.S. regional ministry fields as three-year pilot programs for an integrated North American field structure for the CRC. These two regional ministry fields, each serving several classes, would be intermediaries connecting the churches of the regions to the agencies and to denominational resources. As part of the two pilot programs, each test region would have a regional advisory council, composed of two people from each classis in the region, to work on strategic direction for the region and to monitor and encourage regional ministry development. In the third year a comprehensive evaluation would determine whether such a regional configuration should gradually be extended, be modified, or be discontinued.

C.   Administrative staff should be assigned team responsibility for implementing and integrating ministry decisions approved by synod and the Board of Trustees (pp. 333-35).
Under the proposed structure, the team of senior ministry executives, newly designated as the Ministries Administrative Team (formerly, Ministries Coordinating Council), would take an active role in developing and implementing the integrated ministry efforts of the individual agencies. The general secretary would continue to be the administrator for ecclesiastical matters, and the executive director of ministries would implement and direct ministry plans—both working as approved by synod and the Board of Trustees. However, the emphasis on team decision making and implementation would be strengthened.

D.   The Board of Trustees should be classically based (pp. 337-39).
The CRC Board of Trustees, invested with synodical authority, should be the primary body to manage the ministries of the CRC between meetings of synod. If this is the case, the committee strongly recommends, in light of our Reformed polity, that the Board of Trustees include a representative from each classis. This Board would have oversight of all matters except those which synod entrusted

to the respective boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary through the adoption of their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws (see CRCNA Board of Trustees' Constitution, Article II).

If every classis has a member on the Board of Trustees, every classis will share equally in the governance of the CRC. In addition, such representation will allow the input of significant local concerns and communication, including due consideration of classical-ministries-committee advice for the denomination and its agencies.

E. The governance structure of agencies should be altered, and agency concentration on the development and delivery of ministry should be enhanced (pp. 339-42).

CRC agencies are blessed with skills, expertise, and passionate support that cannot be duplicated at the local or classical level. Therefore, we recommend that each agency continue to concentrate principally on delivery of ministry as approved by synod and the Board of Trustees with the support of an agency-specific ministry council. Each agency except Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary would have a twelve- to sixteen-member ministry council, functioning as a committee of the Board of Trustees, to assist the agency in prioritizing ministry opportunities, considering input from the classical ministries committees, and being a passionate support base for the agency's ministries and its staff. In this recommended organization the ministry councils would provide significant advice and would assist the agencies in evaluating and developing their ministries. They would replace present agency-based structures. Whereas the Board of Trustees would be the governing body for oversight and approval of overall denominational plans between meetings of synod, the ministry councils would be important parts of the denominational system. This shift is one of the key recommendations of the committee. It is seen as a way to resolve many governance problems. Presently the complex structure of agency governance has caused considerable confusion, lack of ministry integration, and, sometimes, conflict. The creation of the Board of Trustees in addition to the already-existing agency boards has resulted in dual and competing governance and reporting to synod.

F. The Canadian structure adopted by Synod 1997 should be modified somewhat to blend with this report's recommendations (pp. 343-46).

For reasons related to legal, tax, governance, and public-recognition needs in Canada, a distinct Canadian component of the Board of Trustees should continue. Planning for a Triennial Conference in Canada should continue to be supported. The new position of Canadian ministries director is a valuable addition. However, the body of our report discusses some minor differences which must be addressed to align the governance structures suggested in this report and those outlined in the Canadian structure report approved by Synod 1997.

III. Additional comments

A. Synod should note that the committee is not recommending a complex governance system to support denominational communications. To assist in communication, the CRC, over time, has created competing, complex structures that are overlapping, not coordinated, and often ineffective. We believe that communication is frequently hampered by such complexity. Instead, we

have attempted to recommend a simplified structure that supports effective ministry, especially in classes and congregations. There are multiple avenues of communication, most of which need not be tied directly to governance structures.

B. Unless care is taken to study all the committee's recommendations, some may initially feel that in the proposed new structure there is greater consolidation of decision making in the hands of fewer individuals. The committee sincerely believes that this will not be the result if these recommendations are adopted as a whole. Input from the new classical ministries committees, regional advisory groups, a classically based Board of Trustees, and agency ministry councils should provide for constant feedback, input, and discussion and should place increased emphasis on integrated ministry plans at both the local and denominational levels. These new or reconfigured groups should provide synod with far greater opportunity to consider priorities, develop a denomination-wide vision, and delegate a clearer ministry plan to the Board of Trustees for implementation. The report describes these changes in detail.

C. We thank synod for the opportunity to serve on this committee. We also sincerely thank the classes, agencies, and individuals who were more than generous with their ideas, time, and patience. When one serves on a committee such as this, one cannot help gaining an appreciation for the breadth and depth of the many ministries of the CRC. The denomination is blessed with many individuals, both employees and volunteers, who exhibit a dedication that can be understood only in light of the God whom we seek to serve.

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As the Christian Reformed Church in North America approaches a new century, the future of our denomination will be deeply affected by our capacity to spread the gospel from a Reformed Christian perspective to our North American neighbors. In our newly adopted denominational vision statement we have agreed that "As a people called by God, we see the church as a growing, diverse family of vibrant congregations in which thousands worship God celebratively, grow in his Word, and honor the Creator as Lord." The vision statement also speaks of the church's "ministries of love, mercy, and justice—combined with articulate witness—which change hearts and lives by proclaiming wholeness in Christ alone" (CRC Mission and Vision Statement, 1997). To implement this vision, we cannot be an inwardly focused church. Rather, we must work to become a denomination which more fully shares the good news that "our world belongs to him," that "Christ is Victor; his rule has begun," and that "the Spirit is at work, renewing the creation" (*Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, Preamble, para. 2, 1986).

Organizational structures by themselves cannot achieve this vision. Only the people of our churches, living out their lives with God's blessing, can work toward this goal. Yet organizational structures can either facilitate this vision or create barriers to accomplishing it. Our current denominational structures for ministry and governance have, in general, worked well in the past. They have allowed the CRC to build a wide range of denominational ministries. The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S. (the U.S. Structure Committee) is deeply grateful for all who contributed to the development of strong CRC ministries over the past century and a half. Yet the U.S. Structure Committee is convinced that, without some changes, the current structures will not serve us as well in the future as they have in the past in our efforts to reach out in word and deed to our North American neighbors. Some adjustments in both the structure for denominational governance and the supports for ministry are required to implement effectively the vision which the CRC has embraced. Such adjustments will allow us to maximize the CRC's contributions to the mission of God.

The U.S. Structure Committee regards matters of organizational structure as part of the organizational journey on which the CRC embarked when it was founded in 1857. Given both past and current ministries and member relationships, the recommendations which follow are only the next pages in the CRC organizational story. They build on many people and structures that have gone before us. Thus we have tried to concentrate on what the committee believes at this time to be a manageable amount of change which can improve our future ministry while building on our organizational history.

Acceptance of change requires that we grow beyond an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality. Not only does our denominational history teach us that

organizations can and must continue to develop as time and culture change; our Reformed theology also supports the idea that organizations, as part of God's creation, need ongoing renewal. A "continuous improvement" mentality for the organizational structures and systems supporting ministries is a better match with our experience and theology.

The U.S. Structure Committee also acknowledges that we cannot know in advance every detail required to implement our proposals. Synod mandated our committee to describe the broad vision and recommend basic structural parameters. We have tried to anticipate and respond to as many issues as possible that have been raised in this study process. We have looked carefully at the balance of local and centralized elements in our denominational system. However, to some degree, we must trust the Board of Trustees, the proposed ministry councils, and the senior denominational administrative team to work out some of the necessary details over time. With this understanding we offer our analysis and recommendations.

The main body of this report is divided into the following sections:

   I.   Historical Background
  II.   Principles and Guidelines Framing Committee's Recommendations
 III.   Scope of the U.S. Committee's Mandate
  IV.   Rationale for Change
   V.   Process of Committee Consultation
  VI.   Proposed Adjustments in Ministry and Governance
 VII.   Financial Implications
VIII.   Implementation Plans
  IX.   Conclusion
   X.   Recommendations for Synodical Action
        Appendices
           Appendix A: Reorganization Process: A Report by the Executive
                        Director of Ministries
           Appendix B: Proposed Mandates for the Canadian Ministries Board
                        and the U.S. Ministries Board
           Appendix C: Financial Analysis of Restructuring Proposals
           Appendix D: Implementation Document

I. Historical background

About a hundred and forty years ago, shortly after the Christian Reformed Church began, the denomination began to develop its capacity for carrying out specialized ministries. The early ministries were developed by the vision of a few committed, energetic individuals who created ministries which gradually evolved into denominational agencies. As these agencies emerged, they were undergirded by governance committees to guide the administrative leaders of the agencies. In most cases the agencies were relatively independent, and each developed its own particular ministry.

As the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church expanded, the denomination continued to be built on this organizational model. Each new ministry was paired with a new governance board or committee. The implicit assumption was that a structure which worked well for a few ministries would work well for many ministries. By the late 1970s the CRC had developed over sixteen separate ministry/governance entities: The Back to God Hour, Calvin

College and Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, CRC Publications, Chaplain Committee, Synodical Committee on Race Relations, Committee on Disability Concerns, Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Fund for Needy Churches, Ministers' Pension Fund, Committee on Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad, Pastor-Church Relations Committee, Interchurch Relations Committee, and Historical Committee. The majority of these entities were governed by classically based boards, each of which directed the energies of church members toward the ministry of, governance of, and communication with a particular agency. Yet there were few mechanisms for joint planning and collaboration in ministry or for meeting the needs of congregations. As a result, there were often serious conflicts in ministry between field and administrative staff of the various agencies and congregations.

To address the conflicts and improve collaborative ministry during the 1980s, synod set in motion a process of denominational restructuring, which initially focused on ways to improve the collaboration between the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and World Missions. Synod 1984 commissioned its first committee to review organizational structure. That committee, later named the Vision 21 Committee, reported to Synod 1987. The three principles and eleven guidelines in the "Vision 21" report were approved by synod as the basis for the future structure of ministry in the CRC.

At about the same time synod approved a new structure, which included the Board of World Ministries, to coordinate the roles of World Missions and CRWRC, two internationally focused agencies which were struggling to collaborate with each other. This new board was staffed by a director whose role was to bring these two agencies into a closer working relationship with each other.

Yet this was not the end of the desire to improve collaborative efforts in the CRC. Subsequently, a Structure Review Committee was appointed by synod to recommend how the "Vision 21" principles and guidelines should be implemented. The Structure Review Committee provided several recommendations to Synod 1990. The synodical advisory committee assigned to review the study committee's work used the study committee's report as a foundation for its own advisory-committee recommendations to synod. The advisory committee requested that synod adjust the role of the Synodical Interim Committee, giving it more authority to enhance coordination of ministry; that synod create a ministries management team from among the leaders of the agencies; and that synod hire an executive director of denominational ministries to implement the decisions of the Synodical Interim Committee. The advisory-committee recommendations were approved by Synod 1990. By 1992 they led to the hiring of an executive director of ministries and the beginning of the Synodical Interim Committee's transformation into the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. Yet in 1990 the recommended changes in the basic composition of the Synodical Interim Committee were not adopted by synod; nor were any changes in the governance for the agencies of the CRC approved. As a result, the newly created structures overlapped older administrative and governance structures, creating dual governance structures.

It is important to note that, in 1996, by approving the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, synod reaffirmed the role of the CRC Board of

Trustees as the designated governance entity of the CRC. Synod indicated its intent that this board function not as a coordinating or advisory entity but as the designated governance body for the denomination between meetings of synod.

Since 1992 other changes in governance structure have occurred. Five separate agencies—Abuse Prevention, the Chaplain Committee, the Committee on Disability Concerns, the Pastor-Church Relations Committee, and the Synodical Committee on Race Relations—were merged into the Pastoral Ministries agency in 1994. In that process their separate boards were also merged into one Pastoral Ministries Board.

During this same period, but for different reasons, synod was examining the structure of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. Recognition was growing that the CRC needed means by which to exercise a national voice in the Canadian context that was recognized and respected by Canadians. In 1990 it decided that regional synods in Canada were not the most advisable option. Yet synod also realized that because the CRC is one of only two surviving binational denominations in North America, structures which could encourage the development of ministries in Canada and support Canadian members of the CRC were needed. The review of Canadian structure, begun in 1990, culminated in Synod 1997's approval of a new structural model for the CRC in Canada. Approval was given for the development of a Canadian Ministries Board (to replace the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada), a Canadian ministries director, and new initiatives to invigorate Canadian ministries at both the classical and regional levels.

The mandate of the Canadian Structure Committee was limited to the organizational structures needed in Canada. The committee's decisions resolved many organizational questions in Canada at a propitious time with the goal of directing the energies of the church in Canada toward outward service and evangelism in the Canadian context. Yet the committee's mandate did not allow it to address questions about means for integrating the new Canadian structure into the whole structure of our binational denomination. As a result, these newly created Canadian structures were developed as another overlay upon preexisting administrative and governance structures. Thus, for the CRC in Canada, there is now a triple-layered governance structure.

In summary, in the history of the denomination's structure for ministry, synod regularly asked for and approved improvements in discrete structural pieces. Beginning in the 1980s, synod also began to question how all the pieces of the structural puzzle could fit together to make an integrated picture. After several earlier synodical attempts to integrate structure, Synod 1996 created a body, the U.S. Structure Committee, to consider the whole picture. (This history is further detailed in Appendix A, which was originally submitted as a portion of the Board of Trustees' report to Synod 1998.)

II. Principles and guidelines framing committee recommendations

Adjustments in ministry delivery and governance which could enhance our effectiveness as a denomination must be based on principles and guidelines which grow from both our Reformed church history and Reformed church polity. After reviewing our theological bases, prior synodical reports about such matters (especially "Vision 21" principles and guidelines adopted by

Synod 1987, *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 596), and implications of those foundations for organizational structure, the committee has formulated the following principles and guidelines, which should undergird our organization as a body of Reformed congregations.

A. *Principles/values*

1. Principle 1: The Lordship of Christ is paramount.
     Ultimate authority over the church, its agencies, institutions, and ministries resides in the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. All Christians live and serve in common submission to Christ's authority. From Christ, her head, the church receives the mandate to find the lost, nurture the found, care for the needy, and serve the Lordship of Christ in all areas of creation (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22; Rom. 8:22).

2. Principle 2: The local church council possesses "original authority."
     "Original authority" (see Church Order Art. 27-a) clearly does not imply autonomous authority. In Reformed church polity, as distinguished from presbyterian and congregational polity, the council is the source from which church authority flows. The council exercises its authority as the representative of Christ, in submission to the written Word, in the manner in which Christ taught us, and for the welfare of the church and her ministries (Matt. 20:24-28; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17).

3. Principle 3: All other ecclesiastical authority is delegated authority.
     The authority of major assemblies is delegated authority. Councils delegate members to classes, and classes delegate officebearers to synod. Because Christ's authority is expressed through the offices of the church, decisions of church assemblies are "considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order" (Church Order Art. 29).

4. Principle 4: Synod delegates authority to carry out a mandate when it assigns responsibility for that mandate to a board.
     The authority of the board of an agency or institution is delegated authority. By virtue of the authority synod delegates, a board governs an agency or institution of the church in line with its particular mandate. Such a board exercises its authority in Christ's name and according to his Word, in line with Reformed ecclesiology, and for the efficient and effective administration of the church's work.[1]
     Synod holds boards accountable for governing well; at the same time, it trusts boards to perform their delegated tasks well on behalf of synod.
     These four basic principles are Reformed foundations for the more specific organizational guidelines/goals which follow:

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[1]Synod 1973, in the Guidelines for Understanding the Nature of Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination adopted several observations regarding the church's need for organizational structures and the authority vested in those who are appointed. Although Synod 1973 was addressing somewhat different issues, the principles of Reformed ecclesiology on which synod based its statements are important to remember in our current discussions.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 62-64)

B. Guidelines/goals

1. Guideline 1: Each classis should participate in the governance of denominational ministries.

   The governance delegated by synod to boards historically has involved representatives from the classes on most of the boards. This practice has resulted in several large boards. In moving to the consolidation of governance boards, it is necessary to affirm that each classis will have a representative on the governance board.

2. Guideline 2: Achieving the goals of collaboration and integrated ministry requires an organizational structure with sufficient governance and administrative authority.

   The governance and administrative structure of the agencies and institutions must be able to assure the unity of the mission and the effectiveness of programs and personnel. In addition, the structure should allow for effective decision making and resource allocation.

3. Guideline 3: Ministries as extensive and diverse as those of the Christian Reformed denomination require careful, unified long-range planning and implementation.

   The unity of the mission must be more than talk. The ministries must mirror that unity through coordinated and collaborative long-range planning. A unified long-range plan is essential, and it must be more than a collection of various parts. Ministry priorities, the allocation of resources, and the elimination of duplication need to be part of such a long-range plan.

4. Guideline 4: Denominational ministries ought to be unified in purpose and complementary in approach.

   The Christian Reformed Church is officially committed to "the unity of the mission" of the church as reflected in synod's approval of the Constitution of the Board of World Ministries (*Acts of Synod 1986*, p. 642ff.) and later replaced by the Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church as approved by Synod 1993 and reaffirmed by Synod 1996. The agencies, institutions, and other administrative structures of the CRC should reflect that unity both in purpose and in practice.

5. Guideline 5: The ministries approved by synod ought to be financially supported by the churches of the CRC.

   When synod approves ministries, both continuing and new, it should be understood that there is a covenant of financial responsibility created in this process wherein the churches will support what synodical representatives have approved.

6. Guideline 6: Keeping ministry close to the people, nurturing local partnerships, and including diverse peoples in the vision and mission of the denomination are important.

   Ministry in the first place is God's people obediently responding to the divine call to be agents of proclamation and reconciliation. Denominational ministry, therefore, must flow from the hearts and commitments of God's people. Synod 1996 called for equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic and minority persons in the leadership and other

influential roles at all levels of the denomination. As the CRC becomes more diverse, this diversity should be represented not only in ministry but also in governance.

7. Guideline 7: Functional ministry specialization is important to effectiveness.
   Though the mission is unified and though governance on behalf of synod is consolidated, the various mission specializations ought to be retained. The CRC continues to value the special expertise which agency-based ministry professionals have developed over many decades of learning and service.

8. Guideline 8: Administrative layers and governance overlap within our denominational structure should be kept to a minimum.
   The purpose of this goal is to assure appropriate stewardship of resources. As much as is possible the resources must be used at the front line of the ministry. However, stating that both administrative layers and governance overlap should be kept at a minimum is not to minimize the importance of adequate organization. This guideline argues for balance and restraint.

III. Scope of the U.S. Structure Committee's mandate

When Synod 1996 agreed that the process of restructuring begun in Canada needed to be considered for the United States as well, synod adopted the following recommendations:

1. That synod adopt the recommendation of the Board of Trustees that the process of organizational reflection begin on the U.S. side of our binational denomination.
2. That synod appoint an ad hoc committee to study the structure for ministry in the U.S., to work under the mandate stated below, as a complement to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.

   The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S. is to present to Synod 1998 or 1999 a proposal for an effective structure for enhancing the ministry of our churches (including agency structure for achieving effective ministry in the U.S.). It is understood that the committee will work in direct consultation with U.S. classes in the development of its proposals.

   Ground: The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada has presented models which could affect the ministries of the denomination as a whole.   (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 575)

The U.S. Structure Committee proceeded to work within this mandate during its first year of analysis and consultation regarding the structure of ministries in the United States. Yet when Synod 1997 approved the recommendations of the Canadian Structure Committee, it was apparent that some group must be given responsibility for integrating the new Canadian and U.S. structures. The U.S. Structure Committee then inquired of the CRC Board of Trustees whether its mandate should be understood to include these efforts to develop an integrated binational structure to serve the denomination as a whole. In its September 1997 meeting the Board of Trustees agreed that such a task should be within the scope of the U.S. Structure Committee's mandate. The following motions were adopted:

A. That the Board of Trustees approve the understanding of the U.S. Structure Committee that the committee include the development of a unified denominational agency structure which is complementary to the already approved Canadian Structure report.

B. That the Board of Trustees designate two members of the Board of Trustees—Canadian Corporation with whom the U.S. Structure Committee can officially consult as it seeks to develop a unified binational denominational agency structure.

The chairman requests Gordon Pols and Jake Kuipers to serve as consultants.
(Board of Trustees Minutes 2132)

On the basis of these Board of Trustees actions, the committee has proceeded to conduct analyses and make recommendations germane to the U.S. portion of the CRC but has also sought to provide for a unified binational structure.

IV. The rationale for change

A. *The challenge of a changing culture for the CRC*

There are multiple reasons for the adjustments and changes that the committee is recommending. However, all of these recommendations involve a recognition that the cultures surrounding the CRC are changing, that dynamics for all organizations have shifted, and that the CRC itself is moving to a new stage of its denominational life.

Cultures around the globe and in North America are changing in their expectations of the ways in which the church will provide ministry. Cultures around the world, including North American culture, are ripe for evangelism. If we proclaim that "our world belongs to God," integrated ministries should provide evidence of that wholistic claim. For local and denominational ministries to work both in North America and beyond, they must intertwine evangelistic efforts with authentic worship, concrete service, and educational resources which can support lifelong development in the paths of faith. If we desire to bring the good news of the gospel to those in darkness, we must bring integrated ministry resources to bear on these situations. Effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel in the century ahead will require that, as a denomination, we focus on the wide range of needs which individuals bring with them. Highly compartmentalized ministries are unsatisfactory structures for bringing all of our resources together in a unified witness. They do not allow us to effectively support our congregations and share the good news at home or abroad.

Furthermore, organizational systems are being greatly affected by changes in technology. Computer, fax, phone, and video technologies both allow and require structural adjustments as they revolutionize the flow of organizational information. These technologies allow highly centralized organizations to become less centralized and more collaborative, even when physical and personnel resources are gathered in a few locations. Such changes allow organizations to be more responsive to grassroots needs and initiatives. They also require organizations to change their perspectives on leadership. The plans developed by decentralized leadership networks can and must be intertwined with those of core organizational leaders and board members. A balance of leadership at the core and in the field is needed to promote a unified

organizational vision and mission. Changes in communication systems will continue to affect the delivery of services to individuals and small groups as well as the ways in which leadership and governance are structured.

This present wave of organizational customization and decentralization, prompted by new technological capabilities, is also now possible for all church denominations. How we are organized, how we lead, the ways in which we communicate with each other, and our ability to respond to local situations have changed greatly. While we continue to enjoy face-to-face interactions, the capacity to communicate with each other and provide leadership between meetings has expanded enormously. In addition, our ability to recognize and adapt to local-church needs has expanded, a fact which has implications for how we structure ourselves as a denomination.

The CRC itself is also changing. As a denomination we are much more interested in and much more dependent on a culturally diverse population of North American citizens for the growth and development of our churches. Historically, denominations which have limited their outreach because of past ethnic ties have declined. Taking a lesson from these denominations, we can see that a key strategy for our future must be opening our doors to share a Reformed Christian faith and witness with our North American neighbors. This witness, by and large, must happen first of all in local CRC churches. *While central denominational resources can help and support the work of local churches, the CRC must focus on the development of effective worship practices, strong local ministries, and leadership within our classes.* Therefore, it must develop structures which allow strong local leaders, both lay and ordained, to focus on and flourish in their local and regional contexts.

This shift in North American focus can also provide a stronger support base for the global ministries of the CRC. The U.S. Structure Committee is convinced that for our global ministries to thrive in the future they must have strong local churches to which they are intimately connected. To support global ministries, the CRC must place additional emphasis on expanding and strengthening the base of congregations in North America.

These ongoing changes in the organizational culture of North America and in CRC denominational culture imply the need for significant structural changes in the CRC. While we remain centrally committed to our theology and mission, our organizational structure must be adjusted to address these changes more effectively. The CRC needs organizational structures which will promote and allow for wholistic, decentralized, and localized ministry.

B. Difficulties of current organizational structures

Both the ministry system and the governance structures of the CRC have been affected by our actions over the course of many years.   There are two areas in which current organizational arrangements create difficulties in the development and delivery of ministry. One area of difficulty is in the ministry structure itself. The second area of difficulty is in the governance of integrated ministries. The analysis of these difficulties will lead to several recommendations in Section 6.

1. The current ministry structure

The following chart illustrates current ministry relationships.

The chart illustrates ministry development, not governance relationships.
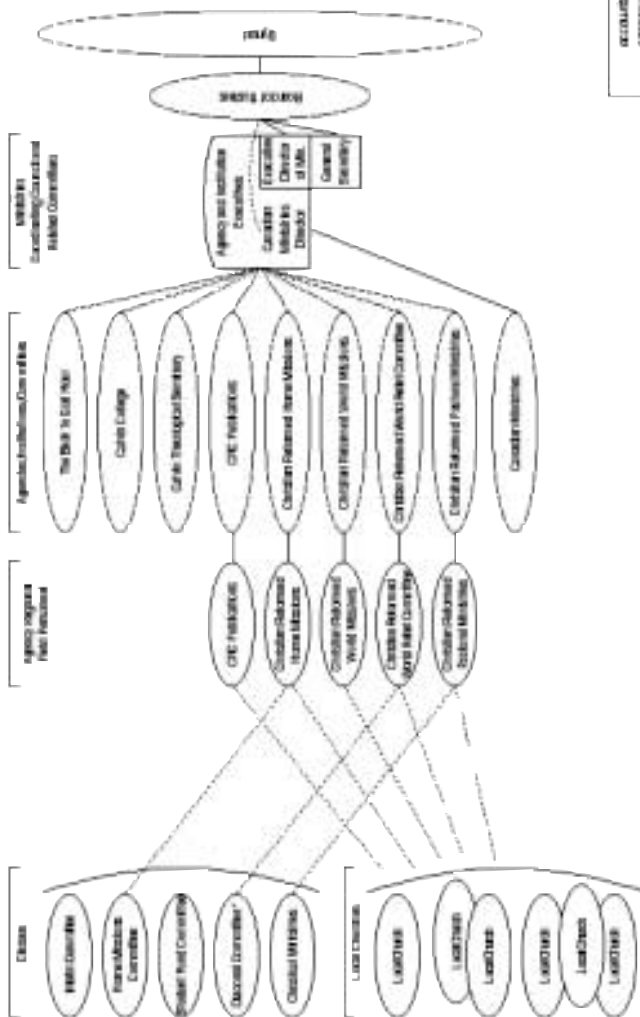
accountability
communication
coordination

The ministry system suffers from several weaknesses which result in significant gaps between local-church needs and aspirations and denominational priorities and responses. As a result, the gaps in communication to, from, and among denominational ministries and churches are significant.

The U.S. Structure Committee believes that the CRC has a wealth of well-developed central ministry resources which could serve congregations and classes more effectively than they presently do. We should be grateful to agencies for both the depth and quality of materials and resource personnel which they have developed and assembled over the decades. However, in a classical survey conducted by our committee, classes did not confirm that their churches are either broadly aware of these rich resources or benefiting extensively from them. The difficulties are not inherent in the ministry resources which we have developed. Instead, they lie in the separate systems that set ministry priorities and deliver ministry resources to church members and congregations.

a. The committee has traced these difficulties to organizational structures which fail to link the priorities and needs of congregations with the available resources. The failure to connect occurs for two principal reasons. One reason is the underdevelopment of ministry planning in many classes. Many classes are affected by a narrow and fragmented vision for their role in the denomination, limited meeting time, a high turnover in the personnel at classis meetings, a concentration on administrative-process matters, and little continuity in classical leadership. The current denominational structures at the classical level do not do enough to compensate for these problems. There are classical interim committees, which handle selected business between full sessions of classis. In addition there are always classical home-missions committees and student-fund committees, usually classical diaconal committees, and sometimes youth committees and other committees. Yet few classes have a well-functioning ministries committee that focuses on planning and implementing classical ministries in an integrated manner. Most classes are not structured to do so.

Well-developed ministry planning at the classical level is one of the most essential building blocks of the adjusted structure which the U.S. Structure Committee envisions. The only alternative to centralized ministry planning is similar effort at the classical level.

Since classes are the assemblies closest to CRC congregations, they should best be able to work with the churches to understand their visions and their needs and to help them plan for ministry together. Classes obtain valuable information about the ministry opportunities for the CRC in their regions. They could also maintain broader links to denominational resources which could be helpful to their constituent churches.

Some classes already affirm that, in addition to fulfilling important ecclesiastical functions for the sake of the church's good order, they must also be active in the development and implementation of ministry plans in collaboration with their constituent congregations. Some classes have already jointly planned new church plants within their boundaries and cooperative ministries for groups such as youth and seniors. Other

classes are leading the denomination in sharing a Christian faith and Reformed theology which can encompass an ever-widening range of cultural groups.

Classes are usually faithful in meeting their responsibilities related to important ecclesiastical tasks, but most are not constructed as bodies which develop a vision and plans for the CRCs in their area. At the present time, many classes do not feel it is their responsibility to actively respond in a timely manner to ministry opportunities. It is very important that each classis develop the capacity intentionally and systematically to work with and respond to the CRC congregations which are members of it. In the missionary context of North America we must think carefully about what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ. Our congregations are beginning to construct such statements of purpose and consciously to design and redesign their ministry plans. At the classical level we must develop means to support the work of these congregations and encourage other congregations to follow their lead.

Furthermore, ministries which get some of their funding from classes need to be supervised on a regular basis. Unfortunately, these ministries often operate quite independently of each other because of the lack of a coordinating body. Decisions regarding coordinated ministry must often be made between the formal classis meetings, which typically occur only twice a year. More active governance of classical ministries is often needed.

b. The second reason for difficulties in the ministry system is the fragmentation which occurs under the CRC's agency-by-agency efforts. There is, for example, no system to ensure that the agencies use common boundaries for their designated regions. Thus, regional boundaries vary from one agency to another. This inconsistency thwarts cooperation when a particular local church lies within one region for one agency and a different region for another agency.

Because the denomination to date has organized its regional field personnel only on an agency-by-agency basis, no one has responsibility for integrated planning and implementation. For example, the committee is aware that, with the encouragement and assistance of various agencies, some classes have conducted diaconal development and planning on one weekend and elder training and development on a subsequent weekend. Deacons and elders from the same local congregation were invited to separate planning and development activities, the structure of which did not encourage them to consult with each other. Similarly, it has been suggested that the development of new church plants should logically involve integrated planning by arms of the church involved in church development, diaconal consultation, local media communications, and leadership education. Yet that is not the typical pattern, even though joint planning, when it has been tried, has generally had positive results.

The current domestic field structure has also exacerbated the disparity among the agencies in their ability to cultivate resources to support ministry. Because some agency ministries, particularly the smaller ones, have not had the resources to develop regional field personnel, there are

considerable differences among the agencies in their capacity to promote their ministries within the classes. This disparity, in turn, contributes to great differences in the capacity of the agencies to raise funds from the churches to complement those provided by ministry shares.

This lack of integrated field staff in North America also complicates the communications process. Field staff of the church communicate regularly but separately with congregations without needing to consider the integrated plan or the priorities of the classes or congregations. Church members themselves must sort through regional field personnel to determine which one can respond to their needs or questions. Both the 1997 denomination-wide member survey and the classical survey conducted by the U.S. Structure Committee indicate that church members feel there are significant communication gaps between the needs and plans of their churches and the denominational agency structure, gaps that could be bridged by an identifiable denominational entity to which the churches could communicate those needs and plans.

In summary, both the lack of classical structures designed to support ministries and the piecemeal agency-based field structure thwart the CRC's ability to connect the aspirations and needs of local churches with denominational resources and support.

2. The current governance structure

There are somewhat similar but more extensive difficulties in the current governance system of the CRC. The chart on the next page illustrates the current governance structure.

Because the governance system has been adopted piecemeal over the past two decades, the CRC now has three governance layers approved by synod. One layer is that of the CRC Board of Trustees. A second layer is that of the committees/boards which are attached to each of the denominational ministries. The third layer, for Canada, is the new Canadian structure, approved by Synod 1997.

Within the first two sometimes competing layers there is significant ambiguity about the role and scope of authority for each of the layers. As a result, confusion and conflicts have emerged on matters of joint planning and coordinated policies regarding ministry, personnel, finance, and fundraising. The discussion and resolution of such conflicts have taken considerable time of denominational leaders. These leaders should be lauded for their willingness to resolve conflict in a peaceable manner, yet, with modifications in the governance structure, such time and resources could be directed toward the facilitation of denominational ministry instead of the resolution of differences.

Without modifications, the ambiguity and confusion generated by the layered denominational structure will be further exacerbated by a third layer as the newly approved denominational structure for governance in Canada is implemented. Currently the denomination has both a Canadian Ministries Board, newly approved by Synod 1997, and a separate Board of Trustees—Canada, which functions as a segment of the CRCNA Board of Trustees. Both of these are designated as governance entities within our

Chart 2

Current Governance Structure

The chart illustrates governance relationships but does not characterize relationship orientation.

accountability
communication
coordination

* These boards have authority to govern their institutions according to their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws
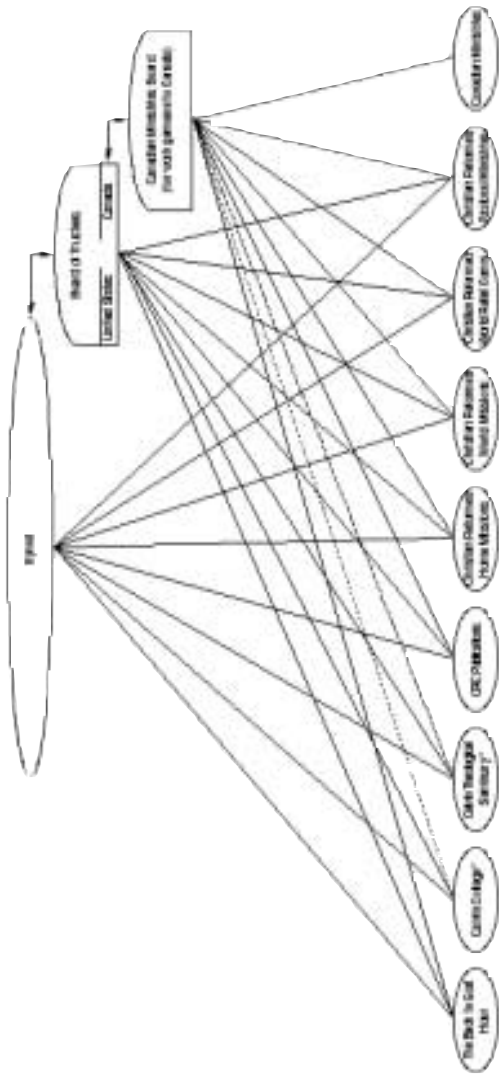
system. The U.S. Structure Committee supports the need for specific denominational support and leadership structures in Canada, but unless some adjustments are made, this third layer—the addition of the Canadian Ministries Board to the existing bodies—adds complexity to the two layers of governance already fraught with confusion and ambiguity.

The governance situation is even further complicated by the lack of congruity between the administrative lines of denominational authority and accountability and the governance lines of authority and accountabil-

ity. The lines of administrative relationship—between the directors of agencies and the executive director of ministries—are clear. Synod has already affirmed that agency directors are accountable for their efforts to the executive director of ministries. However, a similarly clear relationship does not currently exist between agency boards and the Board of Trustees. Since agency directors are also accountable to their own agency boards, the result for them is dual lines of accountability. This incongruity between the denomination's administrative structure and its governance arrangements adds to the confusion.

Finally, because the Board of Trustees does not have the direct involvement of all classes, the linkage between the classes and the Board of Trustees is not as strong as it should be. Because many classes are not represented on the current Board, their synodical delegates sometimes sense significant distance between classes and the Board of Trustees. This does not foster the trust which synodical delegates ought to have in the Board.

The three-layered governance system, the incongruity between administrative and governance reporting lines, and uneven classical participation on the Board of Trustees thwart the creative energy of the denomination. The current structure dissipates our energy at both the local-church and agency levels and also contributes to fragmentation in ministry. Under the current arrangement new and reformulated initiatives need to be reviewed and approved at multiple layers within the governance system before they can be implemented. This not only takes a great deal of energy but also significantly slows down denominational responses to ministry opportunities. The multiple board structures also greatly complicate the judicious allocation of denominational resources for wholistic ministry. If multiple board structures compete with each other for available resources to meet their admirable but limited objectives, there is considerable strain on the pool of resources available for integrated ministries.

Under the present system, there is the expectation that agencies should communicate with and respond to local churches by way of the agency boards. However, the U.S. Structure Committee's survey of classes gives little indication that there is effective communication between agencies and the churches through agency boards. The survey of classes reveals a perceived gap in agency responsiveness to local needs and priorities. The survey also indicates serious communication gaps between agencies and local congregations that have not been bridged by present governance structures. Other means for effective communication must and can be developed, given new communication technologies. The committee believes that the benefits of ministry integration and decreased complexity of governance outweigh any remaining benefits of retaining current agency board structures primarily to facilitate communication.

In summary, both the ministry and the governance systems have evolved through well-intended small structural adjustments made to date, but they have been approved without consideration for the much larger organizational picture of the denomination. New organizational puzzle pieces were added to the denomination, but older corresponding pieces were not eliminated. Individuals and denominational bodies should be praised for trying to improve the structure and effectiveness of their portion

of the operation. Yet the result is a complex, overlapping combination of new and old structures. As is apparent from the two charts above, the result of our decisions over many years has been the creation of unnecessary duplication in ministry and governance functions, confusion concerning the roles and responsibilities of various ministry and governance entities, and long chains of decision making for those involved in ministry. Perhaps we have retained this complexity because we have feared either break-downs in communication or the implications of change. In the process, our denominational ability to be responsive to ministry needs is greatly impaired by the complexity of our current organizational arrangements.

It is the U.S. Structure Committee's intention to clarify core principles and guidelines for ministry and governance, decide what is critical for our structure and what we can live without, streamline our decision-making processes, and preserve more energy to serve local ministry needs effec-tively with denominational resources. Our action is one more step in a process begun years ago to create a more responsive and flexible structure for ministry in a new century.

Changes in the structures for both ministry and governance within the CRC can enhance our effectiveness as a denomination. Without these changes we will continue to encounter bureaucratic tangles which focus our denominational energy on the resolution of competing internal forces instead of on our congregations' call to meet the ministry needs of our members and neighbors.

It is time for the CRC to look carefully at how all of our puzzle pieces, developed and reshaped over time, fit together into a whole picture. How well does the current organizational structure position us to address the vision and mission which we have embraced? Does it support our desire for effective ministry in which we can work together? The U.S. Structure Committee has worked to answer these questions and recommends some adjustments which will allow the CRC to minister more effectively.

V. The process of committee consultation

Very early in its work the U.S. Structure Committee recognized that recommending appropriate adjustments in the ministry-delivery and gover-nance structures of the CRC would require significant analysis and consulta-tion with a host of church bodies. The committee has diligently tried to consult with a wide range of church groups that would be affected by the committee's recommendations. Since the committee's first meeting in the fall of 1996, the following groups have been consulted about current and potential structures:

A. U.S. classes

In the winter of 1996 each U.S. classis was surveyed regarding its opinions about current denominational structures for ministry and governance. All U.S. classes responded to the survey. The compiled results became a basic part of the committee's analysis. In the fall of 1997 two members of the U.S. Structure Committee formally visited with each U.S. classis to seek input, hear concerns, discuss then-current committee thinking, and solicit proposals. In a subse-quent letter each classis was invited to submit further questions and ideas to

the U.S. Structure Committee.[2] It is important to note that classes saw and responded to an early version of the committee's report which has been significantly adjusted in part because of the abundance of classical input. (All Canadian classes were similarly visited by the Canadian Structure Committee regarding the proposals approved by Synod 1997.)

B. *Agency directors and their committees/boards*
Agency directors were regularly consulted about the work of the U.S. Structure Committee. The committee met with all agency directors and their board presidents in February 1997. The committee presented its initial thoughts to agency directors in the July 1997 meeting of the Ministries Coordinating Council and invited their feedback. Those same directors received an oral update on the committee's work in November 1997. At that point, by formal correspondence, their board presidents and executive committees were invited to consult with members of the U.S. Structure Committee. The committee also presented its draft recommendations at the annual meetings of all agency boards/committees in the winter/spring of 1998 to elicit their responses. In the March 1998 meeting of the Ministries Coordinating Council a revised proposal was reviewed, with attention to the proposed ministry councils and to the integration of Canadian structures. Additional meetings were held with groups of agency personnel who might be affected by the changes being formulated.

C. *Deacons*
In the spring of 1997 the committee surveyed all diaconal conferences regarding the current denominational structure and potential adjustments. The committee met with a representational group of diaconal leaders from several of the denomination's active diaconal conferences in July 1997.

D. *CRC Board of Trustees*
A formal presentation on the work of the committee was made to the CRC Board of Trustees in its September 1997 meeting. The president of the CRC Board of Trustees was also an active member of the U.S. Structure Committee.

E. *Synod 1996 and Synod 1997*
Synod 1996 developed the mandate for the U.S. Structure Committee when it began to understand the extent and potential of the structural adjustments being recommended by the Canadian Structure Committee. In that context the 1997 synodical advisory committee which dealt with the Canadian structure proposals was apprised of the state of developments within the U.S. Structure Committee.

F. *Canadian representatives*
At the committee's second meeting, in the fall of 1996, it met jointly with Canadian Structure Committee and received valuable input regarding an understanding of its work. Later two members of the Canadian Board of Trustees were delegated to meet with the U.S. Structure Committee regarding the intersection of the committee's proposals with structural changes

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[2]One specific communication from Classis Greater Los Angeles was received at Synod 1998 and referred to the U.S. Structure Committee. The committee reviewed and considered this communication prior to finalizing its report.

approved for Canada by Synod 1997. A formal meeting occurred in February 1998. This was followed by a presentation to and discussion with the Canadian Ministries Board in March 1998 and follow-up consultations with representatives of the Canadian Board of Trustees and the Canadian Ministries Board in June 1998. (It should be noted that three members of the U.S. Structure Committee also served on the Canadian Structure Committee.)

G. Executive director of ministries and general secretary of the CRC
   Both the executive director of ministries and the general secretary were involved extensively in the work of this committee as advisers. They were not voting members of the committee. Their input was a valuable source of information for the committee's work, but the committee was not constrained by their involvement.
   During the course of these discussions, many significant responses were received that changed our initial thoughts and proposals. Not every suggestion could be incorporated into our recommendations, in part because of conflicting advice. Yet the committee believes the recommendations that have now emerged from its work honor the communication and consultation which it undertook with the church bodies and personnel noted above.

VI. Proposed adjustments in ministry and governance
   On the basis of our work, we strongly believe that some adjustments in our structures can improve the effectiveness of the CRC. For ease of understanding, the proposed adjustments are grouped below into those which decentralize and deepen our North American ministries and those which simplify our denominational governance system.
   During discussions with many groups across the denomination, committee members often heard comments regarding *centralization.* In any organization which is complex and geographically diverse, as is the CRC, some functions and decisions must be centralized, and some must be decentralized. Every organization needs this balance. By garnering input from the classes and churches, the committee has concentrated on decentralizing ministry creation and delivery coupled with ministry integration. At the same time, the committee has tried to simplify governance decision making while retaining adequate checks and balances. The U.S. Structure Committee worked to adjust structures so that the Board of Trustees and synod could concentrate on key issues, exercise oversight, and plan strategically but delegate the authority and responsibility necessary for carrying out approved ministry plans. *In many ways the governance adjustments recommended are the consolidation of a fragmented system, not a tighter centralization of governance.* The committee believes that if readers study the recommended new local and regional structures as well as the checks and balances built into the committee's recommendations, the discussion will focus on the merits of the recommendations, not on whether, at first glance, there seems to be more or less centralization. We believe that centralization will not seem to be a key issue if our recommendations are evaluated in their entirety.

A. Enhancing North American ministries
   The CRC has already recognized the importance of ministry leadership at the classical, regional, and denominational levels. Each of these focal points must function effectively for our North American ministries to thrive because

all are important links between congregational needs and aspirations and denomination-wide vision and resources. *The root purpose of the recommended adjustments in our North American ministry system is to serve local congregations more effectively.* Local congregations are the grassroots of our denomination. They are the places in which we gather the lost and disciple the found. Their members are the ones who distribute the cup of cold water in Jesus' name. Their resources are the ones we draw on to support our global mission. As a denomination, we will thrive or fail to thrive, depending on their vitality. The U.S. Structure Committee believes that with some adjustments in the classical, regional, and denominational structures which undergird our local congregations our ministry can be enhanced.

1. The structure of classes

   To extend the capacity of classes to meet the needs of their congregations, some adjustments in structure are necessary. Presently all classes have at least three committees: an interim committee, a home-missions committee, and a student-fund committee. In addition, classes usually have diaconal committees, some of which work jointly with their home-missions committees, and a few classes have developed executive committees, primarily to provide for integrated planning and ministry between those involved in evangelism and diaconal ministry.
   The U.S. Structure Committee recognizes that there is great diversity in the classes in terms of geography, ideas about the scope of classis, leaders, and local structures developed to date. Thus, it is unwise to assume a "one structure fits all" mentality. Yet the committee believes that a basic change would serve all classes well.
   We recommend that each classis be required to develop a classical ministries committee within its classical structure. The principal tasks of this committee would be

   a. To serve as an active partner in the ministry development of the churches. The committee would assess and guide the planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of ministries within the classis in order to develop them in a vital way and ensure integrated, wholistic ministry efforts which utilize the resources of the churches effectively.

   b. To capture and channel local talent and energy into the work of the classis.

   c. To channel denominational ministry assistance into the classis.

   d. To supervise joint classical ministries when such are appropriate.

   e. To provide supporting information, education, resources, and Christian encouragement to emerging and established CRC churches within the classis.

   f. To communicate the needs and aspirations of congregations in the classis to agencies within the denomination so these agencies can respond with appropriate programming and resource assistance.

   Since the diversity of classes is a given, the classical ministries committee might be structured and comprised in several different ways. Some classes may choose to combine the work of their interim and ministry committees. Most would likely choose to maintain two classical committees, one for the

work currently conducted by the interim committee and another for the work proposed for the ministry committee. In either approach the classical ministries committee should include representatives of diaconal ministries which are not otherwise part of the formal classical structure. For example, in some classes, diaconal conferences function as committees of classis. The U.S. Structure Committee strongly believes that deacons should be involved in the work of the classical ministries committee in some structural ways.

The classical ministries committee may function as a replacement for separate classical home-missions, student-fund, and diaconal committees. It is also possible that those committees would continue to exist separately but be linked through overlapping committee memberships to the planning efforts of the classical ministries committee. Any of these organizational approaches may be appropriate. We expect they will vary from classis to classis, depending on the size of classis, geographical distances, and other factors.

The U.S. Structure Committee believes that when the details of structure are implemented at the classical level, there should be significant latitude. Yet the organization of a classical ministries committee in each classis will aid the effectiveness of each classis in the development and support of important ministries, both at the classical level and among the individual congregations within each classis. In addition, if such a ministries committee functions effectively, it could make it possible for the larger classical meetings to concentrate on the broad vision for ministry in the classis. The assembly could be more celebrative and educational if it were not primarily concerned with administrative details that can be handled elsewhere. We suggest that each classical ministries committee be called by its classis name followed by *CMC* (e.g., Classis Red Mesa CMC). A suggested mandate and structure for a classical ministries committee are included in the implementation document which follows this report. Classes that take responsibility for the planning and development of ministries within their boundaries are critical to decentralizing the ministries of the CRC in North America.

2. Regional ministry coordination and support

The denomination needs personnel who can support the development and growth of the proposed classical ministries committees and create strong connections between these committees and denominational planning and resources. As was noted earlier, many denominational resources already exist on a regional level. Regional home-missions personnel do tasks such as leadership training, small-group ministry, and Congregational MasterPlanning; diaconal consultants provide diaconal training; church-education consultants introduce materials from CRC Publications and provide workshops; World Missions' field representatives promote knowledge of and links with global missions for those in North America. However, at present the resources of the various agencies are not typically coordinated, and the current lack of integrated regional boundaries and structures impairs coordination and support for work at the classical and congregational level.

Common geographic regions must be created for all the agencies. Each agency should operate within those boundaries in its work with churches.

Although defining the specific boundaries of these regions is an administrative task on which the U.S. Structure Committee need not dwell in detail, the committee strongly believes the Board of Trustees should be asked to draw the boundaries of the geographic regions to be used in common by all agencies in their work within the denomination.

After common regions are determined, an integrated regional ministry staff could provide the needed coordination of denominational ministry within a designated region and become the vital link between churches within that region and the resources for ministry within the denomination. However, such a vision requires us to rethink current staff roles.

The Structure Committee recommends that current agency-based regional staff continue to provide their special ministry contributions. However, structurally, we should test a model which expects these staff persons to work as members of a regional denominational team with a designated team leader.

The tasks of these regional ministry teams should include the following:

a. Working with classical volunteers and pastors to develop and grow effective classical ministries committees through education and training about the expected role, responsibilities, and structure of the classical ministries committees.

b. Planning and coordinating the outreach and support efforts of denominational ministries within the region. This will involve some brainstorming with classes and congregations. It should lead to the development of a coordinated plan for more effective outreach and service ministries in close consultation with these classes and congregations.

c. In consultation with classes, developing region-wide leadership-training opportunities for officebearers, pastors, and volunteers. The team would work with the agency resources to provide a coordinated approach to training.

d. Providing access to resources for congregational ministry development. The regional-ministry-team leader could provide the local church with one-stop access to the resources of the denomination about any ministry activity, agency, or program, including resources already available for church education, elder/deacon training, pastor-church relations, and education related to abuse, disabilities, and race relations. In cases where there are significant gaps in the resources available for ministries in the region, the regional ministry team could be involved in the development of new resources that would serve emerging ministries.

e. Developing ways to build partnerships between international CRC ministries and the churches within the region. The intent is to bring the mission on the global field closer to home for purposes of prayer support, mutual education, personal involvement, deputation, and financial assistance.

Regional ministry teams may serve both the classes and the congregations in their regions. As paid denominational staff members, they can enhance the consistency, continuity, and organizational memory of those involved in the classes, since one important aspect of their work will be the

building up of the classes as ministry bodies. However, regional ministry teams may also work directly with local churches, which, by way of their own ministry development, may become positive forces for the renewal of their classes.

Regional-ministry-team leaders will need to have some knowledge of all ministry agencies within the Christian Reformed Church along with strong planning, management, and communication skills. The team leader will be an employee within the denomination's administrative structure. This role will require persons who have significant experience in ministry development and wisdom in dealing with churches and classes. The committee thinks that current agency personnel could be chosen as team leaders. This would avoid another layer of personnel and offset the cost for restructuring. If fully implemented after the pilot projects are assessed, the regional-ministry-team concept would gradually replace the more independent agency-bound approach to field personnel.

Each regional ministry team should be assisted by a regional advisory council. This council could be made up of two representatives from each of the classes in the region, preferably members who serve on their respective classical ministries committees. Although these councils will not be governance bodies, as advisory groups they will provide input about regional needs, share experiences and ideas with classes in the region, add to continuity of ministry initiatives in the region, and help ensure local ownership for the work of the regional ministry team.

A possible pilot regional project was already approved by Synod 1997 for Canada with the understanding that eventually three such regions may exist in Canada. The U.S. Structure Committee recommends that two additional pilot projects be approved for the United States, likely on the West Coast and in the Great Lakes region. The number of classes served by a region would depend upon the number of churches in those classes and the geographic distribution of the classes in a given region.

During the pilot project, members of the teams would continue to report to the agencies for whom they currently work. Team leaders, while retaining a strong link with their originating agencies, would be directly accountable to the executive director of ministries or his designee for the pilot projects. This approach should provide the possibility of comparisons between the pilot projects and close links to both the denomination's senior administrative team and the Board of Trustees during the test period.

The committee believes that the need for integrated regional ministry planning is significant. Consistency and continuity at the regional level are critical to the effective functioning of the CRC in the development of its ministries at the local level. However, because there are many questions surrounding the implementation of a new regional structure, it is wise to proceed slowly. Pilot projects will allow the CRC to sort through the details of a more effective regional structure carefully before a whole regional system is put into place. The Board of Trustees should receive a full evaluation of the regional pilot projects in their third year of operation. If the pilot projects have not effectively met the goals noted above, the geographically dispersed regional structure proposed could be significantly altered or perhaps even abandoned in favor of some other model. However, if, as anticipated, the pilot projects are effective in developing the ministries of

the CRC within their boundaries, they will be the prototypes for expanding the model to all regions. The Board of Trustees should review the evaluation and implement the appropriate regional structure or propose another model to synod at that time.

The cost of supporting regional ministry teams will not be substantially different from current costs since no additional personnel are proposed. Instead, an existing regional ministry person would be designated as a team leader and asked to spend approximately 20 to 25 percent of his or her time in that capacity. For team members this arrangement will require a different allocation of their time and travel funds. However, the committee believes that in the long run the total level of expenditures for regional personnel working for the CRC should not change substantially.

3. Other roles and functions within the ministry-delivery system

The U.S. Structure Committee does not envision significant changes in the role of the CRC's general secretary. Though some of the proposals may affect the questions and concerns which are directed toward the secretary, the basic features of that position should not change significantly.

However, the U.S. Structure Committee does recommend some changes in the roles of the Ministries Coordinating Council and the executive director of ministries. To communicate this change in responsibility, the committee suggests that the name of the Ministries Coordinating Council be changed to Ministries Administrative Team (MAT). The new name will denote the change in the role, performance expectations, and composition of this group. The group, originally approved by Synod 1990 and implemented in 1992 as the Ministries Coordinating Council, would now function as the team of senior executives who are collaboratively responsible for implementation of the decisions and directions determined by synod and its CRC Board of Trustees. Thus, the role of this staff group would shift from that of a coordinating committee to that of an administrative executive team. This group would be charged with the implementation of the integrated strategic plans for denominational ministry which synod has approved. Thus, in this context, the first priority of these executive staff persons would be to support and lead the denomination in the implementation of synodically approved ministry plans and directions.

In keeping with this responsibility, we recommend that the Ministries Administrative Team be expanded beyond the current membership of the Ministries Coordinating Council. The Canadian ministries director should be added as a voting member to the existing team. This addition will mean a total of three Canadians on the Ministries Administrative Team. As important members of the administrative team, the director of finance and the director of personnel should also be full members of this team. The general secretary will continue as an ex officio (nonvoting) member. Since Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary are integral parts of our denomination, their leaders should continue to be members of this team. Maintaining their membership will ensure the coordination and consistency of their work with that of other denominational ministries.

Responsibility for the day-to-day direction and accountability of the team will be assigned to the executive director of ministries. This person will chair the meetings of the group, as is currently the case with the

Ministries Coordinating Council. The executive director of ministries will provide regular reports to the Board of Trustees and, as requested, to synod about progress on the approved ministry plan, ministry opportunities, and the development of integrated ministry projects. If any adjustments in the position description of the executive director of ministries are needed to reflect these responsibilities, they should be made by the Board of Trustees. As in the past, all senior denominational staff are available as needed to the Board of Trustees, its committees, and synod.

The chart below illustrates the proposed changes in the ministry system.

Chart 2
Proposed Ministry System
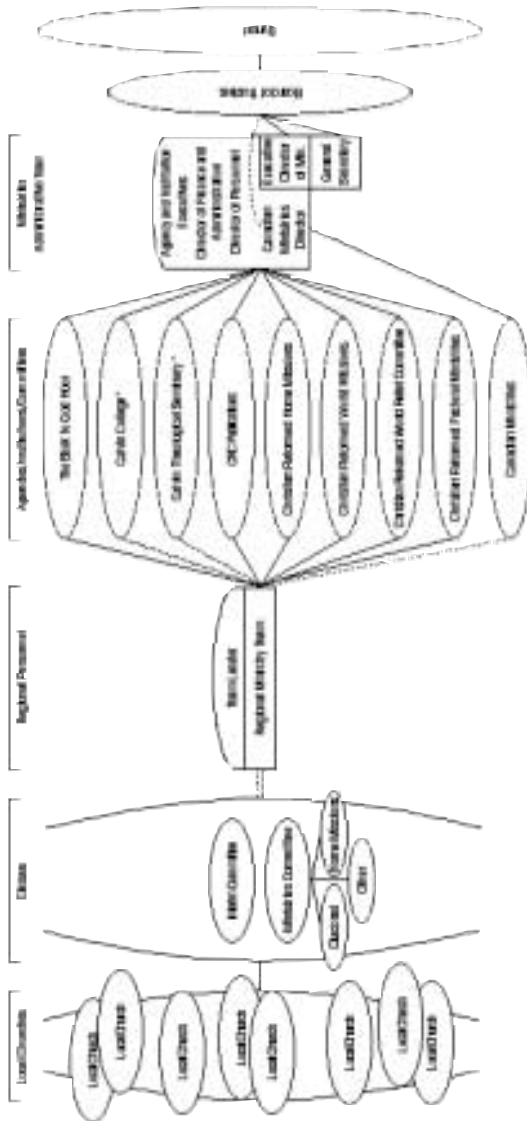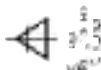
The chart below illustrates the lines of staff accountability and authority within the ministry structure.
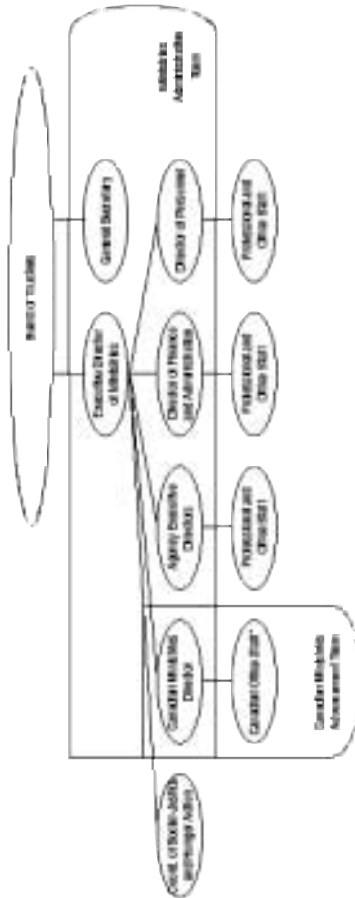
*Canadian controller works under the supervision of the director of finance and administration.

If it is made clear that the senior staff of the denomination are to function as a team, the committee believes that over time the ministries of the CRC are likely to be more effectively integrated. Yet the ministry councils described below will continue to provide the oversight and expertise from which agencies have benefited in the past and to act as checks and balances on the Ministries Administrative Team for the Board of Trustees and synod.

B. Simplifying denominational governance structure

Though the recommendations above will decentralize the responsibilities for ministry delivery and development in the CRC, by themselves they cannot accomplish the tasks ahead. The CRC must also have a governance structure which encourages significant creativity, frees more staff time for the creation of ministry, and makes possible timely responses to ministry opportunities. The CRC, to function as a denomination, must retain judicious oversight of its denominational vision and its operative theology. However, such can be accomplished more effectively with a simplified governance system.

1. The legal structure of the CRC

The U.S. Structure Committee recommends only minor modifications to the legal incorporation of the CRC. Currently, each agency/committee is separately incorporated in both Canada and the United States to distribute liability, to own property, and to provide for advantages in funding. For example, separate incorporation is a significant factor for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in its ability to receive funding from governmental entities in both the United States and Canada.

The U.S. Structure Committee believes that such separate incorporation should continue—with one modification. The legal incorporations of each agency, in both Canada and the United States, should be structured as *subsidiary* corporations of the CRC with members of each agency's ministry council serving as the trustees of a particular subsidiary corporation. If the agencies are structured as subsidiary corporations, the benefits of the current incorporation structure can be retained, and any agency will be discouraged from acting as an independent corporate entity in its planning and decision making.

For overall denominational legal incorporation, the Board of Trustees would maintain two subsections, one for Canada and one for the United States, as has been the case for a number of years. This arrangement would continue to allow the CRC to maintain its identity as two legally incorporated entities. These entities would be identified as the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation and the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Canada. Members of the Board of Trustees would serve as legal trustees of either of these entities, depending on the classis which they represent. The Canadian portion of the Board would function as the Canadian Ministries Board, and the CRCNA Board of Trustees would function as the U.S. Ministries Board to consider ministry priorities under their governance which are specific to each country's domestic situation.[3] Minor adjustments to the mandate of the Canadian

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[3]In Canada, only elected board members, not alternates, may be trustees of a legal corporation. Thus, for legal purposes only, the board members in Canada would be restricted to a subset of the Canadian trustees not including alternate board members from Canada. Classis Lake Superior, the CRC's only binational classis, would function as a Canadian classis for legal purposes, and its delegate, if Canadian, would serve as a member of the Canadian Board of Trustees. It would also be treated as a member of the Michigan Corporation. If, in some years, the delegate is from the United States, the alternate, who would be from Canada, would be designated as a regular delegate to the Canadian Ministries Board and Canadian Board of Trustees, while serving as an alternate only to the CRCNA Board of Trustees.

Ministries Board, approved by Synod 1997, are discussed in a following section. Mandates for the Canadian Ministries Board and the U.S. Ministries Board are detailed in Appendix B of this report.

2. The organizational structure of the Board of Trustees

     The U.S. Structure Committee recommends that the complex, multiple-board structure of the CRC be replaced with a single classically based Board of Trustees. Doing so would honor Guideline 1, that all classes be directly involved in the governance of the denomination as a whole.

     The committee believes this to be one of its most important recommendations. Under this structure each classis would have both governance and two-way communication that cover the entire ministry of the CRC. The board member from a classis could report and discuss denomination-wide matters at each classis meeting. The member could also bring to the Board and agencies the communications, ministry opportunities, and issues from the classis. Such representation, coupled with the proposed classical ministries committees, offers the opportunity for clearer communication and broad input at the governance level.

     This classically based Board would be made up of a representative from each classis and six at-large members. There would currently be forty-seven classical representatives. These would be complemented by six at-large members chosen because of needed Board expertise and/or from underrepresented constituencies. Three of these at-large members should be from Canada and three from the United States. Thus, the voting membership of the Board would be fifty-three (53) members. The executive director of ministries and the general secretary would continue to be ex officio (non-voting) members.[4]

     The members of the Board would be divided into three groups, with overlapping terms of three years each. Each Board member would be eligible to serve for two consecutive three-year terms but would not be eligible for reelection to a third consecutive term. For each elected regular Board member, an alternate member would also be elected to represent the same classis. Regular and alternate Board members would be nominated by their respective classes. These names would in turn be submitted by the Board of Trustees to synod for ratification. For members-at-large the Board of Trustees would, with the input of classes, prepare and submit nominations to synod, from which synod would elect a designated number to serve on the Board.[5]

     The Board would be composed of church members capable of serving effectively as board members. Classically based delegates must be presently ordained officebearers or have served at least one term as either an elder or

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[4]The Canadian ministries director will continue to be an ex officio member of the Canadian Ministries Board and have access to the binational Board of Trustees in matters relating to his work, as is currently the case.

[5]Classis Lake Superior, a binational classis, would be asked to balance its representation, with the regular and alternate members of the board being elected from different countries. This arrangement allows Classis Lake Superior to retain regular membership in the Canadian Ministries Board by using its alternate, even in years when the regular delegate elected is from the United States.

deacon in their local congregations. In keeping with current synodical policy, no more than one-half of the members of the Board shall be ministers of the Word. Synod 1997's decision with regard to deacons' incorporation into the decision making of the church should be honored.[6] The board composition should also take into account church policies with respect to diversity and expertise. Further details of the suggested nomination and election process as well as desired Board-member qualifications can be found in the implementation document which follows this report.

Given a larger Board of Trustees, a working Board-committee structure is highly important in the governance process. The U.S. Structure Committee desired to keep each Board committee large enough to provide multiple voices and sources of expertise but small enough to deliberate together as a subcommittee of the Board. Each of the Board committees should have representation from both Canada and the United States.

The U.S. Structure Committee recommends that there be five integrating committees internal to the Board: Ministry-Development Committee, Church-and-Government-Relations Committee, Administrative Committee, Global-Ministries Committee, and North American-Ministries Committee. Each of these committees will have specific responsibilities to govern the integration of specific ministries with each other.

The principal responsibility of each integrating committee is as follows:

a. Ministry-Development Committee—Responsibility for the development of local congregations and classes through ministry activities related to education, publications, ministry planning, leadership training, and pastoral care for local members of all ages.

b. Church-and-Government-Relations Committee—Responsibility for good order and judicious process in the governance of ecclesiastical decisions and processes related to classes, synod, and interchurch relations as well as governmental relations in both North America and throughout the globe.

c. Administrative Committee—Responsibility for oversight between meetings of the Board of Trustees and responsibility for the nomination process, training and development of Board members, financial-resource planning, personnel policy for denominational employees, and preparing the agenda for Board meetings. Special meetings of the Administrative Committee may be called to take action when the Board is not in session. The Administrative Committee may also call special meetings of the full Board when needed for major issues. Board officers will serve on this committee. Care should be taken to have an appropriate balance of Canadian and U.S. representatives on the Administrative Committee.

d. Global-Ministries Committee—Responsibility for diaconal and evangelistic mission beyond North America through the governance of strategy

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[6]It should be noted that Synod 1997 has already approved that one-third of the Canadian Ministries Board have served as clergy, one- third have served as elder, and one-third have served as deacon. This composition would be retained for the Canadian portion of the Board of Trustees.

formulation and policy decisions related to all mission activities, media, literature, relief, and world evangelism focused in the other six continents.

e. North American-Ministries Committee—Responsibility for diaconal and evangelistic mission within North America through the governance of strategy and policy decisions related to all ministry activities focused in North America which are beyond the scope of local congregations. These will include media, diaconal, evangelistic, social-service, and social-justice initiatives.

One goal of organizing Board committees in such a manner is to provide for coordination and integration of ministry proposals which may arise from the various agencies of the CRC. The five integrating committees described above would receive proposals and recommendations from the Ministries Administrative Team based on the work of the agencies in conjunction with their ministry councils, described below. It is anticipated that, given the range of their activities, various agencies, both together and separately, may submit proposals to more than one of the standing Board committees. For example, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and The Back to God Hour are positioned to submit proposals related to both the North American-Ministries Committee and the Global-Ministries Committee.

The U.S. Structure Committee recognizes that there must be clear responsibility within a larger Board of Trustees for Board-member development in the new structure, for proper assignment of Board members to appropriate roles within the Board, for planning for full Board meetings, for developing the interface between the Board and the ministry councils, and for the authority to make small structural adaptations when required in the anticipated transitions. Thus, this Board structure requires that regular efforts be devoted to the development of the Board itself by its officers and by its Administrative Committee. All of the preceding would be subject to the review of synod.

The full Board would meet at least twice each year. The Administrative Committee of the Board would meet at least every other month, and the other four integrating committees of the Board may meet more than twice per year if deemed necessary.

Accomplishing this change in the composition and structure of the Board of Trustees requires some amendments to the current Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees. Synod should direct the Board to prepare proposals to amend its constitution and bylaws.

3. Continuing support for agency-based ministry specialists
The agency-based ministry specialists which the CRC has developed play an important role in the capacity of the denomination to create and sustain effective ministries at both the classical and regional levels. The U.S. Structure Committee is committed to providing continuing support for these gifted and needed agency-based specialists.

To do so, the committee recommends that each denominational agency be supported by a twelve- to sixteen-member ministry council which can provide consultations and guidance in matters of strategy, program

expertise, and ministry evaluation. Each ministry council would participate in the following areas of ministry:

a. Assessment of strategic directions for the agency's ministries in alignment with denominational strategic plans as endorsed by synod.

b. Evaluation and review of existing and potential ministry initiatives.

c. Analysis of and recommendations about the annual operating plan before it is forwarded to the Board of Trustees.

d. Cultivation of and recommendations for use of financial and personnel resources.

e. Analysis of and recommendations on agency administrative and personnel matters.

f. Communication of information regarding agency ministries and opportunities.

g. Responding to Board of Trustees' requests to assist a particular agency in supporting integrated ministry plans.

h. Acting as trustees of the legal agency corporations, subsidiary corporations of the CRCNA, in both Michigan and Ontario.

The recommended ministry councils would be components of the adjusted planning and decision-making structure for the CRC, functioning as operating committees of the Board of Trustees, committees with special knowledge and expertise focused on agency-based ministries. With effective ministry councils in place, the Board of Trustees and synod could concentrate on exercising oversight, developing strategic direction, handling matters of denomination-wide policy, reviewing the integrated financial plans for ministry shares and commitments, and coordinating the integration of agency-specific ministry plans.

However, as important as these ministry councils are in the decision-making system, they would not work independently. Prior to implementation, all major strategic proposals and initiatives supported by the ministry councils would require approval of the classically based Board of Trustees in accordance with the mandates approved by synod. This requirement will ensure that new initiatives fit within the denomination's desire for integrated ministries, overall strategy, and resource priorities.

Each ministry council would be composed of at least twelve but not more than sixteen members, the actual number being determined on a case-by-case basis. A member would be appointed to a three-year term on a particular ministry council, after which he or she would be eligible for a second term of service, for a total of six years. Within the total number of members approved, each agency would structure its council to fit the needs of its ministries. Members might be selected geographically from regions within the United States and Canada. They might also be selected for their ability to support a particular agency-based ministry through professional

expertise and networks, financial resources, or other areas in which an agency needs assistance.[7]

Once a structure is determined, both classes and agency executive directors could recommend nominees for ministry councils. These agency recommendations would be reviewed by the Ministries Administrative Team and the executive director of ministries for coordination and concurrence. The recommended nominees would be appointed by the Board of Trustees and ratified by synod.

As operating committees of the Board of Trustees, the ministry councils would meet prior to each of the formal Board meetings planned each year. Their recommendations would be communicated to the Board of Trustees. The chair of each ministry council or his designee would facilitate the communication and recommendation links between a given ministry council and the Board of Trustees. Agency directors might also be asked to serve as advisers to any of the five Board of Trustees' integrating committees to which they are assigned. The executive director of ministries, the general secretary, and the Canadian ministries director would have access to all Board of Trustees operating and integrating committees.

It is important to note that the ministry councils may be complemented at the agency level by other noncouncil bodies. Agencies would continue to be free within their available resources, as they have been in the past, to use other working groups for research, analysis, support, and communication within the network of the CRC. There could continue to be a variety of voluntary task forces and work groups connected to agency-based ministries.

Structurally the governance of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary would not make the shift to ministry councils. The current balance of governance authority between these institutions and the CRC should remain the same. However, personnel from both Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary would participate in the new structures for integrated ministry planning since the educational components of ministry are exceptionally important. This is particularly true for the CRC, a denomination which values and nurtures Christian education at all levels and throughout its ministries. The contribution of college and seminary executives as denominational leaders is valuable. Planning of the college and seminary will be joined to other denominational planning in the context of the Ministries Administrative Team, as is currently the case with the Ministries Coordinating Council. In this context, the decisions are advisory to the educational institutions (Board of Trustees Bylaw IV, C, 1).

The CRCNA Pensions and Insurance trustees, Loan Fund Board, Fund for Smaller Churches Committee, Historical Committee, Interchurch Relations Committee, and Youth-Ministry Committee would continue their work as currently prescribed in their mandates. However, to ensure their integration into the overall governance system, these entities would also

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[7]This report does not focus on issues of resource development (fund-raising and volunteers). It is assumed that these administrative responsibilities would continue to be a part of agency-based ministries at this time. Members with a heart for specific ministries should continue to be able to support such efforts directly. Yet the committee encourages agency collaboration in these areas as well.

function as operating committees of the CRCNA Board of Trustees, in many ways similar to the ministry councils. Their work would thus be coordinated with ministry information and planning in other sectors of the church.

The shift to ministry councils for most agencies of the CRC would occur because of changes in the recommended governance structure for the CRC. Yet the strength of agency personnel to contribute for the good of the whole ministry of the CRC must be sustained. The recommended ministry councils would be an important means for continued support of the agency expertise which the CRC has developed. It is expected that the work and activities of the agency ministry councils will be reported to the Board of Trustees and that the Board will regularly communicate with ministry councils. Thus an active link between the Board of Trustees and the agency-based ministries will be established. The Board will in turn report to synod.

4. Checks and balances in the governance structure

A sound governance structure has checks and balances on authority and responsibility. The current system of checks and balances was evaluated by the committee. In the committee's view, the current structure of the CRC has so many checks and balances that they often hamper management efficiency and timeliness in ministry responses. At times they have even led to lengthy conflict.

One of the most difficult issues the committee struggled with was the balance between efficient governance and the need for wide involvement in decision making. Neither extreme—strict hierarchy or constant second-guessing—is acceptable. Yet the committee believes that moving the weight a bit further toward effective governance, while retaining significant checks and balances, is the best approach. The checks and balances consciously designed into the adjusted system include the following:

a. A Board of Trustees composed of a member from each classis to implement the decisions of synod and govern the operations of the denomination between meetings of synod.

b. Five integrating committees of the Board of Trustees designed to develop knowledge of the various ministries of the CRC and the means by which the ministries can work together.

c. Ministry councils as specialized committees of the Board of Trustees which assist agencies in developing their ministries.

d. Classical ministries committees—one in each classis—which make decisions about ministry and priorities within their classes and provide input about ministry opportunities and issues to agencies as ministry plans are developed.

e. Ministries Administrative Team (MAT), which oversees the implementation of all denominational ministry and provides a channel through this team, the executive director of ministries, and the general secretary to the Board of Trustees and synod.

f. A regional ministry structure, if fully implemented in time, as a means of providing better ministry service and communication between congregations, classes, agencies, and the denomination.

g. The normal routes of appeal on personnel matters already delineated in the personnel policy manual of the denomination, which was approved by the Board of Trustees and written into the bylaws of the Board of Trustees itself.

The committee believes that it will take some time to make the adjusted structure function well. However, we believe it significantly improves the planning and integration of denominational ministries while at the same time providing an appropriate level of checks and balances.

C. The intersection with Canadian CRC structures

Synod 1997 affirmed the binationality of the CRC by approving new approaches to both ministry development and governance structure for ministries in Canada. In that process the following recommendations were approved:

1. The Canadian Ministries Board as the agent responsible to coordinate and hold accountable all ministries of the CRC in Canada within the policies set out by synod, the Board of Trustees, and the core values and goals of this [i.e., Canadian Structure] report. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be composed of fifteen to eighteen members, one from each of the Canadian classes and three to six to serve as members-at-large. Classis representatives shall include four pastors, four persons who have served at least one term as elder, and four persons who have served at least one term as deacon.

2. A Triennial Conference, convened jointly by the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees-Canada, for the purpose of ministry visioning.

3. A Canadian ministries director, accountable to the Canadian Ministries Board and administratively accountable to the executive director of ministries, to supervise the coordination of Canadian ministries and act in consultation with the general secretary as spokesperson in Canada on government and ecumenical relations.

4. The grouping of the denominational ministries into three clusters governed by three standing ministry committees: International Ministries, Domestic Ministries, and Church Development. Team leaders will coordinate the ministries of each of the standing ministry committees.

5. The cooperation of the classes through their involvement in the regional ministry centers and their appointment of classical ministries committees and classical diaconal committees.

6. The development of regional ministry centers and the appointment of regional ministry developers, beginning with one prototype in western Canada.

7. The maintenance of current funding for CRC ministry in Canada until the new Canadian Ministries Board is in place.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 403-04)

Soon after the approval of these seven recommendations, the process of implementation began. Members of the Canadian Ministries Board have been selected, and that board began to meet in January 1998. A Canadian ministries director has been selected. Discussion of a regional ministry center in western Canada has begun. Classes in Canada are forming their classical ministries committees. The transference of ministry funds from the now discontinued Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada to the new Canadian Ministries Board is now complete.

Given synod's approval for many of these initiatives in Canada, the U.S. Structure Committee does not wish or expect to undo the foundations for them. The committee is equally committed to the binationality of the CRC and has great appreciation for the initiative and organizational leadership that the Canadian portion of the CRC is exercising on behalf of the entire denomination.

However, a few adjustments to the approved Canadian structure are needed to align it with the emerging recommendations for the entire CRC, including the U.S. portion. The adjustments proposed are believed to be relatively modest since the U.S. committee recommendations are based on the same values as those articulated in the Canadian report. The U.S. Structure Committee report honors and preserves the decisions of Synod 1997 regarding Canadian ministries. The intent is to preserve and build on the governance status accorded to the new Canadian Ministries Board. The suggested changes are mainly to enhance clarity of structure and avoid the creation of an excess layer of governance.

The U.S. Structure Committee affirms Recommendations 3, 5, 6, and 7 above as approved by synod. No adjustments are needed in these recommendations to create a binational fit and implement the vision for the delivery of ministry which they embody.

Some adaptations in Recommendations 1, 2, and 4 are necessary, however. After consultation with some of the members of the Canadian Structure Committee and two delegates designated by the Canadian Board of Trustees, the following adaptations are being recommended:

1. Adaptations to Recommendation 1—Canadian Ministries Board
    The U.S. Structure Committee affirms the importance of maintaining the Canadian Ministries Board as it was chartered by Synod 1997. Its governance role regarding ministry activity and resource utilization in Canadian ministries is strategic. The CMB also plays an important role in supervising the Canadian ministries director, endorsing the appointment of senior Canadian denominational staff, assuring the collaboration of ministries in Canada, and arranging for the regional ministry centers in Canada. These functions should remain the responsibility of the Canadian Ministries Board, and this report neither anticipates nor desires changes in that governance authority. Only two adjustments are anticipated, one in the role of the separate Canadian Board of Trustees and one in at-large membership on the Canadian Ministries Board.

    To avoid multiple layers in the governance structure, the U.S. Structure Committee proposes that the Canadian Ministries Board, already a classically based board, become the Canadian component of the CRC Board of Trustees. This proposal merges the work of the Canadian Board of Trustees, which currently operates as an separate entity, with that of the Canadian Ministries Board. Merging these two bodies would require that the responsibilities now delegated to the Canadian Board of Trustees be reassigned to the Canadian Ministries Board. The transfer of these responsibilities is detailed in the implementation document (Appendix D), which notes the required adjustments in the mandate of the Canadian Ministries Board. The principal changes in mandate are the following:

a. The Canadian Ministries Board would be registered as the legal entity and agent of the CRCNA in Canada.

b. The Canadian Ministries Board would be the convening agent of the Triennial Conference (no other changes in the conference plan itself are anticipated).

c. The Canadian Ministries Board would be responsible for ecumenical relationships within Canada, for which the Canadian ministries director is the appointed spokesperson.

d. The Canadian Ministries Board would be the participating body for Canada in the CRCNA Board of Trustees, exercising overall responsibility for the binational ministry of the CRC.

Besides this merger, the other change is in the possible number of at-large members on the Canadian Ministries Board. Currently that board's bylaws allow three to six at-large members to be elected. To date the Canadian Ministries Board has chosen to elect three such members. If the Canadian Ministries Board now becomes the participating body for Canada in the CRC Board of Trustees, the CRC Board of Trustees' bylaws would need to be altered to stipulate that three (3) at-large delegates would be appointed from Canada. This adjustment will require that the CMB's bylaws be altered to allow for the election of only three at-large members for the Canadian Ministries Board. All other qualifications and terms of service for members on the Canadian Ministries Board fit with those proposed for the CRCNA Board of Trustees. No other changes appear necessary.

2. Recommendation 2—Triennial Conference
   As noted earlier, nothing need change in the vision and plans for the approved Triennial Conference in Canada. The only change to be noted is that the convening agent would now be the Canadian Ministries Board since the separate and distinct functions of the Canadian Board of Trustees would have been merged with those of the Canadian Ministries Board.

3. Recommendation 4—The grouping of denominational ministries into three clusters for governance in three standing ministry committees
   The U.S. Structure Committee understands and supports the impetus behind the recommendation for three ministry clusters for governance purposes. We agree that ministries should be governed in a manner that encourages collaboration and integration among the many agency-based initiatives. However, structurally there must be some changes to blend what was proposed in the Canadian report with the broader structure proposed for the CRCNA Board of Trustees.
   The Canadian standing ministry committees were designed as a set of three broad standing committees which could incorporate those involved in the oversight of active Canadian programs such as native ministries, diaconal ministries, and interchurch relations. These entities do need governance in the Canadian context, and therefore a way must be found to honor the need for ministry governance in Canada while integrating Canadian governance structure with the proposed committee structure of the CRC Board of Trustees.

Since the three standing committees approved for the Canadian Ministries Board (International, Domestic, and Church Development) so closely parallel three of the recommended committees within the CRCNA Board of Trustees (Global-Ministries Committee, North American-Ministries Committee, and Ministry-Development Committee), it is possible for these three committee designations to continue within the Canadian Ministries Board without posing a major problem for binational integration.

However, to create a harmonious flow, the composition of the three standing ministry committees envisioned within the Canadian Ministries Board should be altered. It would be difficult to include non-Board members in such standing Board committees when a similar composition is not planned in the binational governance structure. Instead, we suggest that the Canadian Ministries Board consider whether these three standing ministry committees can function *within* the Canadian Ministries Board, their *formal* membership being limited to Canadian Board members, who would exercise the governance authority in reviewing ministries in Canada.

These smaller Canadian Ministries Board committees could be supplemented with subsidiary councils or task forces, Canadian bodies which would function in a manner similar to the agency-based ministry councils. These bodies could advise and support key ministries funded by the churches in Canada. They could then be governed by the Canadian Ministries Board and could regularly consult with and advise that Board about their work. The Canadian Ministries Board itself would retain the governing authority for such ministries in Canada, but these subsidiary councils and work groups would have their own functions. This approach retains the governance position of the Canadian Ministries Board but allows the composition of its standing committees to blend smoothly with similarly composed committees within the CRC Board of Trustees.

This change in functioning should not be difficult to implement. From its earliest meetings, the Canadian Ministries Board, recognizing that some potential adjustments might occur in this area, decided to begin the proposed standing ministry committees as administrative groupings instead of governance entities. Thus there is flexibility to accommodate these adjustments. If synod concurs that there is a need to adjust the composition of the Canadian standing ministry committees, the U.S. Structure Committee suggests that resolution about the specific governance structure for ministries under the purview of the Canadian Ministries Board be the CMB's responsibility.

If these three modifications to the Canadian structure proposal adopted by Synod 1997 are approved, then the Canadian structure, the structure for the U.S. portion of the church, and the overall CRC Board of Trustees can be aligned while each entity still retains separate and distinct governance within its sphere of responsibility. The required modification of the Canadian Ministries Board's mandate is highlighted in Appendix B of this report.

The chart that follows illustrates the proposed governance structure for the CRC with a reconfigured Board of Trustees and the proposed ministry councils.

Chart 3:

Proposed Governance Structure

The chart illustrates governance relationships but does not depict organizational orientation.
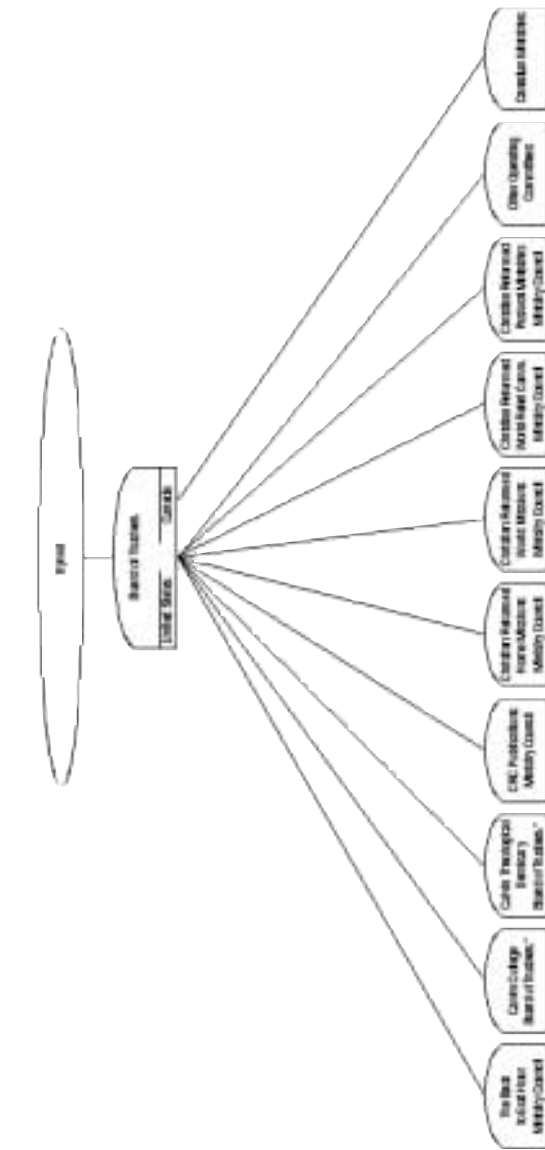
Synod

Board of Trustees

Executive Director   Synod

- The Back to God Hour Ministry Council
- Connecting Board of Trustees*
- Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees*
- CRC Publications Ministry Council
- Education & Assessment Home Missions Ministry Council
- Education & Assessment World Missions Ministry Council
- Education & Assessment Ministry Council
- Education Relief and Development Ministry Council
- Other Standing Committees
- Constant Committees

accountability
communication
coordination

*These boards have authority to govern their institutions according to their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws.

The following chart illustrates the proposed structure *within* the Board of Trustees.

Chart 6

Functional Structure Within the Board of Trustees
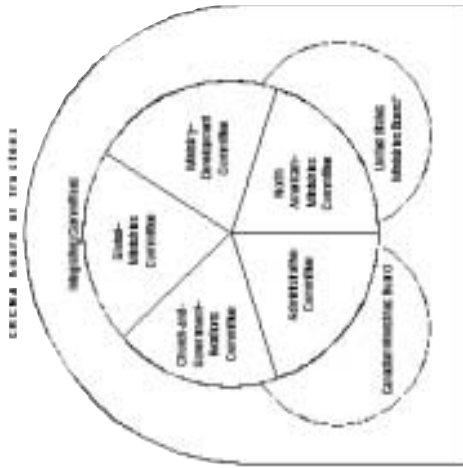
Perspectives of the United States Ministries Board are performed by the CRCNA Board of Trustees (A Michigan Corporation)

The U.S. Structure Committee is strongly convinced that the proposed approach will be a significant improvement over the current multiple layers of governance.

VII. Finances

The U.S. Structure Committee was aware of cost issues from the beginning and carefully considered the financial implications of the changes proposed. Yet it chose not to base its recommendations first of all on matters of cost but on Reformed polity and good organizational principles. This decision allowed the committee to seek improved ministry and governance structures without seeing its work principally as a financial matter. Only later, after discussions with many parties involved, did the committee consider the cost implications.

The committee is pleased to report that as it began to reach tentative recommendations and evaluate the cost implications, the impact on existing costs was determined to be relatively small. The financial implications of our recommendations can be summarized as follows:

A. Classical ministries committees

Given the geographic size of most classes and the number of their meetings per year at present, the cost increases for establishing classical ministries committees should not be significant. First, many ministry-committee meetings could be tied to meetings of classes, thus avoiding separate travel expenses. Second, the meetings can be held in churches to economize on facilities. Third, telephone, fax, e-mail, and other improvements in communication systems should reduce the need to meet in person.

The U.S. Structure Committee believes these costs can be handled adequately at the classical level if the above suggestions are followed. In addition, the benefits of an integrated classical ministry plan should more than offset the nominal local costs. In the cases where there is a wide geographic area, the committee suggests that denominational personnel assist in getting the classical ministries committees started to minimize the learning curve and the number of meetings required.

B. Regional ministry teams

As noted earlier in the report, many agencies already have their own field personnel in North America. Some regional structures are quite formal, such as that of Home Missions, which has eight full-time regional representatives. At the other end of the spectrum, some agencies rely primarily on volunteer representatives across the denomination. There are many variations between these two extremes—such as part-time personnel and combinations of centrally located agency personnel who work with local volunteers.

As a result of this diversity, the costs of the current system are very difficult to fully assess. The committee's attempt to measure these costs by agency is detailed in Appendix C.

The U.S. Structure Committee believes that the costs of an average regional ministry team in the field would approximate those currently incurred by regional field personnel. This report recommends the testing of only two such teams for three years and then evaluating whether to expand the model for all classes. If, in time, this model is fully implemented for all CRC classes, the long-run costs would depend primarily on the number of classes in each region. That remains to be determined, depending upon the test experiences and configuration of the common regions. However, the estimated range of a region is not substantially different from the size of regions currently used by Home Missions or the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

The committee suggests that the costs for the two pilot projects be recouped by requiring agencies to agree to absorb, within their existing budgets, the portion of time their personnel spend in joint planning and activity for the test regions. The team leader's time which is allocated to the test projects would also require a reallocation, not an expansion, of some existing agency funds. If such a funding arrangement is approved, the pilot projects should not result in significant additional costs.

C. Board of Trustees and agency ministry councils

The costs of the current governance structure, including the current Board of Trustees and the agency boards, are also detailed in Appendix C. These figures are based upon the number of meetings held in 1997 and include travel, lodging, and meals for current boards. This analysis indicates that the total cost, *excluding costs for synod*, was $244,400 in 1997.

The projected costs of the proposed classically based Board of Trustees assume up to three meetings a year for the Board and its related committees and three additional meetings a year for the Board's administrative committee. The ministry councils, for which we are assuming an average of fourteen members, would meet twice each year. Using the same average cost per attendee per meeting, we estimate that the total costs of the proposed governance structure would be approximately $168,000 per year. There would still be some instances in which agency communication costs, previously associated with agency board meetings, would continue. Under the revised structure these would become programming costs instead of governance costs. Thus, the denominational savings would likely be less than the $76,000 noted in Appendix C.

Based on this analysis, the U.S. Structure Committee believes that the proposed ministry and governance system can provide a more broadly based Board of Trustees as well as effective ministry councils, classical ministries committees, and regional teams at a total cost comparable to that of our present structure.

Thus, overall the committee believes that cost should not be a significant factor in deciding for or against its proposal, particularly in light of the potential benefits.

VIII. Implementation plans

A. Managing the transition

Should the U.S. Structure Committee's recommendations be adopted as proposed, it is important to plan for an orderly transition from the current to the new structure. Ministries of the churches, classes, and agencies should not be disrupted by either too rapid or too slow a transition.

The committee considered transitional issues and discussed them with denominational staff. Since it would be difficult for synod to deal with all of these details while it is in session, the committee offers its thoughts and suggestions for an orderly transition to the new structure in a separate implementation document detailed in Appendix D. That document will be given to those whom synod charges with the implementation of its decisions. However, in general, the committee recommends that the CRC use the 1999-2000 fiscal year to plan and prepare the denomination for implementation of the adjusted ministry and governance system at and after Synod 2000.

A decision about the wisest means to handle these transitions remains a matter for synod to decide. However, a well-handled transition can smooth implementation. Since multiple governance structures will remain in place until the transition is complete, the committee believes that the responsibility to carry out what has been approved should be assigned to just one body. Synod should determine to which body it will assign this responsibility. The committee suggests that the Board of Trustees fulfill that role, reporting annually to synod on this matter.

The committee also suggests that the responsibility for dealing with the details of implementation be clearly assigned to a specific group within the denomination. While there may be other choices, the committee suggests that synod appoint a task force, with representation from both the Canadian and U.S. structure committees, to facilitate the transition. This task force would advise the Board of Trustees until Synod 2001.

During the transition it is important that both communications and denominational finances be planned and administered judiciously. This report places strong emphasis on cultivating greater congregational and classical ownership of ministry directions. Thus it is vital that all congregations and classes in the CRCNA have a thorough understanding of the changes adopted and the effect of these changes on their vision and responsibilities. These transitions ought to be carefully communicated to all Christian Reformed congregations so that they understand the adjusted structure for the denomination's ministry and governance. The Board of Trustees with its senior administrative staff must take responsibility for communicating these structural changes to congregations and classes.

The committee also recognizes that during the next few years the Board of Trustees may recommend some nominal budget reallocations among current denominational ministry shares to accomplish needed changes. Since this is within the scope of the Board's authority, the committee trusts that it can be handled appropriately.

B. Evaluation of the adjusted structure

The U.S. Structure Committee realizes that, although it is recommending a particular blueprint for the future, it can see only through a glass, darkly. There is no perfect vision about future events, resource realities, or needs within the denomination. Structures must continue to be evaluated to prevent them from becoming barriers to ministry. Therefore the committee recommends that, after the initial transition task force completes it work in 2001, synod require the Board of Trustees to appoint an advisory organizational-structure committee which will meet at least once annually to assess the denomination's organizational systems and recommend further steps in the process. Other denominations which conduct such periodic reviews (e.g., Church of the Nazarene) have found that such an approach allows gradual change as needed. A denomination can then more readily adapt to new organizational challenges in a rapidly changing ministry environment and lessen the need for wholesale overhauls. Such an approach fits with the concept of continual improvement, which as a denomination we should be eager to embrace.

IX. Conclusion

Organizational structures are important means of support for the ministry journey of the CRCNA. As that journey with our Lord continues to develop, so must the organizational structures which encourage our continued ministry together. As a denomination we have been blessed by visionary ministry leaders, devoted ministry staff, and healthy support from denominational members. With some adjustments in our structures we can build on that heritage to more fully engage our members in wholistic ministry, both in North America and around the globe. May we eagerly embrace adjustments which enable us to continue our ministry journey together.

X. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Rev. Henry Numan, Dr. Shirley Roels, and any other committee members present at synod.

B. That synod adopt the principles and guidelines for organizational structure in Section II of this report, a follow-up to related principles and guidelines adopted by Synod 1987.

C. That synod require each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee.

D. That synod require the Board of Trustees to develop common North American geographic regions within which all CRC agencies will conduct their work.

E. That synod approve a test of two regional ministry teams in the United States and a review of their effectiveness in the third year of operation.

F. That synod approve the change of name from the Ministries Coordinating Council to the Ministries Administrative Team and the expected change in function.

G. That synod approve the needed restructuring of the legal incorporation of the CRCNA with subsidiary and affiliated corporations to accomplish the goals described above in this report.

H. That synod approve the development of a classically based Board of Trustees with a related committee structure.

I. That synod approve the development of ministry councils to support The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Pastoral Ministries to replace current governance structures.

J. That synod approve the suggested adjustments in the Canadian governance structure required for effective binational ministry as detailed in Appendix B.

K. That synod direct the Board of Trustees to prepare proposals for the amendment of its constitution and bylaws and the bylaws of the various corporate entities in order to bring them into conformity with this report and to present such changes for approval to Synod 2000.

L. That synod assign responsibility for implementation of the approved changes to the current CRCNA Board of Trustees with advice from a transition task force composed of selected members of both the Canadian and U.S. structure committees.

M. That synod require the Board of Trustees to convene an advisory group to review denominational structure annually, beginning in 2001.

N. That synod discharge the committee.

<div align="center">

Committee to Study Structure
for Ministry in the United States[8]
Brent Averill
Peter Borgdorff (adviser)
Jack De Groat
Mary Jo De Jong
Ray Elgersma
David Engelhard (adviser)
John Kuyers
Henry Numan (chair)
Shirley Roels (facilitator)
William Terpstra
Frank Velzen
William Weidenaar

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Appendix A
Reorganization Process: A Report by the Executive Director of Ministries[9]

I. Foreword
The writing of this document was undertaken at the direction of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church as recorded in the minutes of the Board of Trustees:

> Motion carries that the Executive Director of Ministries and staff provide a report on the reorganization process since 1991 and some projection as to what is anticipated in the future. The draft is to be prepared by the December 1997 Board of Trustees meeting and is intended to be presented to Synod 1998.
> (May 1997 Board of Trustees minute 2101, B, 1, b)

Though the specific instruction mentions the year 1991, beginning there is like beginning to read a novel in the middle. It makes more sense to trace the present organizational reality back to Synod 1983, where specific concerns

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[8]*Note:* Synod appointed two committee members who did not sign the report. Rev. Manuel Ortiz resigned in the fall of 1996 due to other commitments. Dr. Roger Greenway resigned in the spring of 1998 after contributing significantly to the committee's work, especially on the principles and guidelines sections, with which he agreed. He indicated a lack of agreement with some of the committee's recommendations but chose not to present a minority report.

[9]This report was first issued as Appendix A to the Board of Trustees report to Synod 1998. It is included for information. The committee found it informative but did not participate in its preparation.

were first raised and acted on by synod. The material presented on these pages is based on several official records, including the *Acts of Synod* and the minutes of the Ministries Coordinating Council, the Synodical Interim Committee, and the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church.

This report has been reviewed by the present members of the Ministries Coordinating Council, and their recall and perspectives were considered in this final copy. However, recalling a journey is difficult. I make no claim to have incorporated every detail, though I certainly hope that all of the major steps along the way have been incorporated. Nevertheless, official decisions and perspectives on such decisions can blur, and to the degree that such happens in this report, I assume full responsibility. At the same time, I am deeply indebted to my colleagues, and especially to Mrs. Nelvina Ilbrink, who serves as executive assistant to the executive director of ministries, for their assistance in the preparation of this historical summary.

II. Introduction

The instruction of the Board of Trustees which led to the preparation of this historical summary has its own context. It is fifteen (15) years ago that the journey of reorganization was initiated, and during that time many changes have been implemented. Present members of the Board of Trustees, members of agency boards, recently appointed personnel, as well as other interested members of the Christian Reformed Church may not know where we have come from. It is hoped that this historical summary and the names and events associated with the changes that have been introduced will provide a clearer picture of the present and what may be anticipated in the future.

Another reason why a summary such as this may be helpful and discussing the issues contained herein important is that change, and especially organizational change, is difficult. One could adduce many reasons why that is so, but it is sufficient to say that a major reason that change in the agencies and institutions of the church is especially difficult is that in the church context life is supposed to be stable. Deeply embedded in our own history, as well as in contemporary culture, is the fear that change inevitably introduces something that will not be as good as what we previously experienced. It is sometimes suggested that the church (and, for the purposes of this report, the agencies and institutions of the church), her faith and theology, her practices, and even her organizational form are best left alone. At the same time, it is also generally recognized that life itself is an agent of change, and therefore change is inevitable. The ways we think, communicate, conceptualize, relate, and do our work have all been radically influenced by the technological development that now shapes the world we live in. The church and its agencies also are part of that world and thus need to make adjustments in the way they fulfill their mission. Consequently, we, as members of that church, must also make adjustments in how we experience life together.

Despite the inevitability of some changes, there are also some things that do not change. The church is always the church. The theology of the church, its faith and basic commitments, and its covenantal fellowship should remain the same. There may be a uniqueness about the way the church organizes its agencies and institutions because they are mandated to do "churchly" kinds of ministries. That is the point. The mission of the church is scripturally based and is its highest value. The way the church conducts its life, including its

organizational life, ought to reflect that [we] are "not [our] own, but belong to [our] faithful Savior Jesus Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1). Doing matters a certain way organizationally (i.e., in a church-like way) is held as a high value in the Christian Reformed Church. But there is also much in church-based organizations that is similar to organizations that are for profit. There are corporate status, employer-employee relations, budgets, policies, and procedures. It is important to note that the focus of the organizational journey described in this report is the church-based organizations commonly known among us as agencies and institutions and not the structure of congregations or the ecclesiastical assemblies (i.e., classes and synod). There is, of course, a direct relationship between congregations/classes/synod and the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church, but it is also important to recognize the differences between these two groupings. The agencies and institutions are called into being by the church for a particular purpose and, in that sense, are part of the church. However, agencies and institutions are not the church in the same sense that congregations, classes, and synod are the church. As we speak of the former in relationship to the latter, it is important to keep that distinction clear.

It is our prayer and hope that reviewing the course of our journey will help the reader understand where we have come from and what still needs to be done as the Christian Reformed Church faces the twenty-first century. It is equally our prayer and hope that the journey yet to be traveled will demonstrate our highest value of doing God's work in a God-honoring way. To him be the glory—always.

III. Beginnings

The agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have enjoyed various life spans. It is interesting and useful to list the birth dates of each if only to show that some have many more years than others of organizational and cultural development. The birth dates of the agencies and institutions[10] of the CRC since the formation of the denomination in 1857 are listed in chronological order below:

Calvin College	1876[11]
Calvin Theological Seminary	1876
Christian Reformed World Missions	1888
Christian Reformed Home Missions	1896

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[10]The designation "agencies and institutions" is to be understood as follows: Agencies are all the major synodically created ministry-program organizations except Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, which bear the designation "educational institutions." Synod, from time to time, also appointed committees of various kinds, such as the Interchurch Relations Committee, the Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad, the CRC Loan Fund Committee, the Ministers' Pension Fund Committee, the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee, the Youth-Ministries Committee, and the Judicial Code Committee. These various committees are not the primary focus of this report.

[11]Calvin College grew out of a seminary-preparatory program in the 1890s, became a junior college around the turn of the century, and became a four-year college in 1920.

CRC Publications[12]	1911
The Back to God Hour	1939
Christian Reformed World Relief	1962
Pastoral Ministries[13]	1995

The formation of the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church followed a standard pattern. A need was identified, and synods responded by appointing a committee, approving a mandate, providing financial resources, and requiring an annual accounting of the committee's work. In most instances such a committee's initial work was done by volunteers, but also in most cases a committee's work soon required professional staffing, which, as is natural, then also caused organizational growth, complexity, and expanding mandates. Each of these organizations also developed its own culture and rules of procedure (both written and unwritten), even though each was governed by a synodically appointed board. Each reported directly to synod; there was no pre-implementation review of an agency's ministry direction or of the priority that should be placed on a certain ministry in the context of the whole CRC program.

This way of operating worked well for many years. Countless numbers of people took ownership of the ministries to which they were assigned or for which synod asked them to assume responsibility. Nothing in the pages that follow is intended to diminish or criticize what was decided or done by the individuals and organizations that functioned in their positions over the years. Agency and institutional boards, as well as their personnel, functioned mostly as synod intended.

But perhaps synods for many years failed to keep pace with changing attitudes and organizational realities. So it was and is. Subsequent synods (i.e., after 1982) learned to grapple with new realities and changing ways of doing things. I, for one, am proud of the way CRC synods met the challenge. In the practical realities of our life as a church, the Spirit's leading can be seen vividly. Building the church is most often identified with new conversions or new church plantings, but the Lord also builds his church through processes of institutional change that better equip the church to respond more and more effectively to the continuing call of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

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[12]CRC Publications is a combination of various previously separate committees. There may well have been some sort of catechism-materials committee almost from the beginning of the denomination in 1857. The date of origin of the Publishing House is not known. *The Banner* became officially part of the denomination in 1914; the Sunday School Committee was joined in 1936; the Education Committee in 1946. These various entities were merged with the Publishing House into CRC Publications in 1968.

[13]Pastoral Ministries was organized in 1994, combining into one agency the former Chaplaincy Committee (1942), the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (1972), the Pastor-Church Relations Committee (1982), the Committee on Disability Concerns (1986), and the Committee for Abuse Prevention (1994).

IV. Initiating the discussion

Serious discussions about restructuring the agencies and institutions of the CRC grew out of an increasing discomfort with the perceived lack of cooperation and integration among the various ministries as practiced by the agencies and the institutions of the church. Concurrent with this discomfort was also the positive desire for more and better coordination of the church's growing ministries. Already in 1971 synod addressed this concern by enlarging the three (3)-member Synodical Interim Committee into a regionally representative committee of twelve (12) and expanding its mandate to include "encouraging coordination among the agencies." Interestingly, synod did not want the expanded SIC to have any *authority* to coordinate; its mandate was only to *encourage* cooperation. Agencies themselves were to figure out the best ways to accomplish such coordination. As a matter of fact, synod never did empower the Synodical Interim Committee with the requisite authority to ensure results. It seems that whenever the Synodical Interim Committee tried to initiate some leadership, synod would slap the SIC's wrists for exceeding its authority and/or mandate.

Already during the 1970s and 1980s, the denominational staff people were regularly engaging in conversations about how we could do our ministry better, more effectively, and more efficiently together as agencies of the church. Even then we had several domestic ministry agencies and at least three international ministry agencies. Questions were raised about the effectiveness of our organizational structures, the traditional divisions of "world" and "home" agencies as that pertained to geography, or word/deed as that pertained to wholistic ministry. Staff members were also aware of increasing tension between various agencies as geography and mandates overlapped and lack of clarity about organizational priorities increased.

Various synods prior to 1982 received reports about developing difficulties, especially between two of the international ministry agencies, Christian Reformed World Missions and Christian Reformed World Relief. It is telling that Synod 1977 appointed the Missions Coordination Council. The advisory committee dealing with these concerns during Synod 1984 observed the following:

> The Synod of 1977 appointed the Missions Coordination Council, consisting of representatives of the various mission agencies of the denomination, "to share pertinent board actions, projected plans and goals, *and to discuss the resolution of difficulties which may arise between the agencies*" [italics added].
>
> The Missions Coordination Council was given no instruction about reporting to synod. The Missions Coordination Council has worked at its mandate since its formation, and in so doing became involved in the discussion and resolution of difficulties between World Missions and CRWRC, but was not able to go beyond discussion and advice for reasons of its "limited authority, resources, and time." In its report via the Synodical Interim Committee, the Missions Coordination Council registers its negative reaction to the World Missions and Relief Commission proposals for the reorganization of World Missions and CRWRC. The Missions Coordination Council also asks synod to "clarify the status of the Missions Coordination Council and its relationship to the Synodical Interim Committee and to synod, in the light of the decision of 1977."
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 663-64, Art. 111)

Interestingly, especially in the light of later developments, the *Acts of Synod 1984* then records the following action in response to the advisory committee's observations:

That synod reaffirm the mandate of the Missions Coordination Council as set by the Synod of 1977, without instruction for reporting either to synod or the Synodical Interim Committee.

Grounds:
1. The mandate of the Missions Coordination Council continues to speak to the need for interagency communication.
2. There is no need for having the Missions Coordination Council report to the Synodical Interim Committee or to synod.
3. The task of dealing with the issue of World Missions and CRWRC relationships has been assigned by synod to the World Missions and Relief Commission.

(*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 663-64, Art. 111)

Synod 1982 intervened in the developing conflict between World Missions and World Relief by appointing the World Missions and Relief Commission and giving this commission sweeping powers over both agencies. To accomplish the task, synod appointed respected and experienced churchmen.[14] It was a time of pain and learning as the church forged, some would say "forced," a new cooperative alignment among the mission agencies of the denomination. The World Missions and Relief Commission in 1985 recommended, and synod approved, the creation of a fifteen (15)-member Board of World Ministries to oversee the work of World Missions and CRWRC.[15] The Board of World Ministries made a significant difference for the good in the relationship between World Missions and CRWRC and continued in existence until February 1993, when its functions were transferred to the Board of Trustees and the functions of its executive director were integrated into the position of the executive director of ministries. The Board of World Ministries first reduced the level of conflict between World Missions and World Relief and followed by nurturing a more productive environment for wholism in ministry and by encouraging programmatic integration (also called joint fields) when appropriate to the ministry needs in a particular place. In many respects this integrative ministry approach has become a model for the later development of a denominational ministries plan and for the accompanying organizational realignments that are under discussion at the present time.

Concurrent with the concerns for the ministries of World Missions and CRWRC there were also voices expressing more general concerns about the way agencies functioned and were expanding. At Synod 1983 Rev. Donald Wisse, a delegate from Classis Hudson, made an impassioned plea for an overture from his classis which asked synod to address the larger context of how agencies were functioning in the life of the denomination. Initially his plea fell on deaf ears, but before synod adjourned, it reconsidered the concerns expressed in the overture and assigned to the Synodical Interim Committee the responsibility of addressing the issues raised. The Synodical Interim

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[14]Synod appointed Mr. Gerard Berghoef, Mr. Norman De Graaf, Rev. Harold Dekker, Dr. John H. Kromminga, and Dr. William Spoelhof.

[15]The Board of World Ministries was composed of five (5) representatives who also served on the Board of World Missions, five (5) members who also served as members of the board of CRWRC, and five (5) members-at-large elected by synod. Dr. Roger Greenway served as its first executive director (1986-1990), followed by Dr. Peter Borgdorff (1990-1992). Dr. Roger Van Harn served as the Board of World Ministries' president from 1985-90; Rev. Charles Terpstra served as president from 1990-1993.

Committee then appointed a committee which later became known as the Vision 21 Committee.[16] The creation of yet another committee, with a broader mandate than that of the World Missions and Relief Commission, resulted in two parallel, and in some sense uncoordinated, discussions in the church. Both the World Missions and Relief Commission and the Vision 21 Committee worked in relative confidentiality and isolation from each other, with the unintentional result that agency boards and personnel were feeling increasingly threatened and resentful. It was not surprising, therefore, that, when the Vision 21 Committee reported to Synod 1987, only one year after the Board of World Ministries had been appointed, synod was forced to choose between an extensive reorganization proposal recommended by the Vision 21 Committee and endorsed by the Synodical Interim Committee, on the one hand, and the agencies, which mostly opposed the recommendations, on the other hand. Synod 1987 sought its way out of this unfortunate dilemma by adopting the principles and guidelines[17] recommended by the Vision 21 Committee and retaining the existing agency structure rather than instituting the organizational restructuring proposed by the Vision 21 Committee.

The actions of Synod 1987 did not really settle anything except perhaps to set a direction. Realizing that there was more to be done, synod appointed a Structure Review Committee[18] to prepare a report for Synod 1990. In the grounds for adopting the principles and guidelines, synod said,

1. The report ("Vision 21") articulates principles in harmony with Reformed church polity and guidelines which reflect good stewardship.
2. The extensive and valuable work begun by the Structure Study Committee (i.e., "Vision 21") needs to be continued.
3. The specific structural proposals have raised significant questions which need to be answered.
4. The church needs additional time and advice before finalizing such far-reaching decisions regarding restructuring.

(*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 597)

One further action by Synod 1987 should be mentioned. When the Board of World Ministries was appointed in 1985, synod also decided that the Board of World Ministries arrangement would be evaluated in five years (1990). Therefore, Synod 1987 appointed a World Ministries Review Committee[19] and instructed it to consult with the Structure Review Committee. This World Ministries Review Committee also reported to Synod 1990. It will be further discussed below.

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[16]The Vision 21 Committee was composed of Dr. Anthony Diekema, Mr. Kenneth Horjus, Rev. John Klomps, Mr. Richard Postma, Mr. Ray Seven, Mr. Frank Velzen, and Mr. Wayne Vriesman.

[17]The principles and guidelines were adopted by Synod 1987 (see *Agenda for Synod 1987*, pp. 276-80, and *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 596).

[18]The 1987-1990 Structure Review Committee was composed of Mr. Dirk Booy, Rev. Bernard J. Haan, Rev. George Vander Weit, Rev. Wilbert M. Van Dyk, Mr. Frank Velzen, and Rev. J. Vos. Mr. Kenneth Horjus and Rev. John Klomps served the committee for part of its work, but neither was serving on the committee when the report was completed.

[19]The World Ministries Review Committee was composed of Rev. Harold Dekker, Rev. Jacob Hasper, Rev. Raymond Opperwall, Dr. William Spoelhof, and Dr. Edwin Roels.

V. Decision time - Synod 1990

Several developments converged at Synod 1990. The Structure Review Committee presented its report.[20] The World Ministries Review Committee presented its report.[21] The Board of World Ministries presented a nomination for a new executive director to replace Dr. Roger Greenway.[22] Finally, synod was faced with a number of protests from the agencies, mostly expressed at meetings with the synodical advisory committee at synod. These converging developments produced several oddities of the type unique to synodical gatherings. First, even though the advisory committee assigned responsibility for the Structure Review Report substantially agreed with the Structure Review Committee's work, it proceeded to draft its own proposals for consideration by synod. Second, synod interviewed and appointed Dr. Peter Borgdorff for the position of executive director of World Ministries one day and three days later voted by implication to phase out the Board of World Ministries and the executive-director position as soon as newly adopted proposals could be implemented. Third, the report of the World Ministries Review Committee hardly received any consideration at all by synod, perhaps because both the advisory committee and synod were preoccupied with the report of the Structure Review Committee and with drafting an alternative structure as a substitute proposal. At least by implication it was decided to phase out the Board of World Ministries.   Whatever the reason for the short shrift given to it, the World Ministries Review Committee deserved better treatment than it received, and synod passed up an opportunity to learn some valuable lessons about the complexities of agency coordination and cooperation (see *Agenda of Synod 1990,* pp. 363-400). Rather than reviewing the dynamics and emotions that played out at this critical synod meeting, it is probably best to proceed to the actual decisions made which became the framework for what we have today.

Lest anyone conclude that synod rejected most of the ideas advanced by the Vision 21 Committee, as well as the revised proposals of the Structure Review Committee, it is instructive to look at at least part of the advisory committee's observations:

> The need to restructure our operations occupied synods again during most of the eighties and was initiated by an overture of Classis Hudson in 1983. The outcome of subsequent synodical studies was a document called "Vision 21." The report's general direction was received with considerable approval, albeit that approval was accompanied by some rather profound questions. In order to answer these questions, the 1987 Synod appointed the Structure Review Committee, whose report is before this synod . . . .
>
> We want to express praise and gratitude for the work of the Structure Review Committee. In its report the committee places very important considerations before our denomination: the relationship between governance and administration, the consequence of centralization and decentralization, the relationship between local and denominational ministries, . . . and the matter of necessary coordination and its relation to the accompanying need for authority.
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> The theme that stands out in the report is the need for coordination and integration of the denomination's operations. This faithfully represents the wish

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[20]*Agenda for Synod 1990*, pp. 331-62.

[21]*Agenda for Synod 1990*, pp. 363-400.

[22]*Agenda for Synod 1990,* p. 107.

of the church expressed by previous synods . . . .

Your advisory committee has carefully studied the model and weighed the consequences it might have in the operation of our denomination. We recognize the merits of the plan, and we have tried to preserve those merits in the proposal which we submit to synod. We stress that we do not consider our proposal to be totally different from the model submitted by the Structure Review Committee. Our plan shares with that of the SRC a striving for coordination and integration in the execution of our kingdom ministries. However, it is an altered one which responds appropriately to the concerns which were brought to our attention during interviews with representatives of the denomination's agencies.

The record shows that the Structure Review Committee's report was considered and synod then adopted a motion (with five grounds) "that synod not approve the plan and its proposed implementation which are presented by the Structure Review Committee."[23] Having made this decision, synod moved quickly to the consideration of an "alternative structure," which contained the following major components:

1. The strengthening of the mandate of the Synodical Interim Committee by giving it the authority to manage the denomination's ministries and agencies.[24]
2. The appointment by synod of an executive director of denominational ministries, who will exercise ongoing management on behalf of synod and its interim committee.[25]
3. The establishment of a Ministries Management Team[26] composed of the heads of all denominational ministries and agencies and chaired by the executive director of denominational ministries.
4. The requirement that the existing agencies begin a process which will result in the combination of agencies where practical and feasible and the combination of administrative support services to establish necessary economies and efficiencies.

(*Acts of Synod 1990*, pp. 675-76, Art. 110)

Synod also adopted "steps toward implementation" for the Synodical Interim Committee to follow and instructed the Synodical Interim Committee to report to Synod 1991.[27] Subsequent developments prove that Synod 1990 made foundational decisions that significantly altered the independence of the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church[28] and moved them in a direction of interdependence and cooperation as together they reflect the one mission of the denomination. In the process, attention was also focused on achieving greater efficiencies in the use of denominational resources, but the main

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[23]*Acts of Synod 1990,* p. 670, Art. 105.

[24]The Synodical Interim Committee officially became the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church upon the provisional adoption of the constitution and bylaws by Synod 1993.

[25]This position was filled by Synod 1992 and renamed executive director of ministries.

[26]The Ministries Management Team was later renamed the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC).

[27]*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 680, Art. 115.

[28]The term *agencies* in this context includes Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. It was only later that the designations were changed to *agencies and institutions*, the latter referring to educational institutions, as explained in Footnote 1. The needed independence required for educational institutions is provided for in both the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church.

intended thrust of the changes that followed, and ultimately the most church-like expectation, is that the ministries be as effective as possible in carrying out the ministry to which the Christian Reformed Church is called.

VI. Toward implementation

Immediately following Synod 1990 the Synodical Interim Committee convened meetings that involved both agencies and advisers to develop the details of the restructuring plan. In a supplementary report to Synod 1991 the Synodical Interim Committee provided a detailed plan, which was then slightly amended by synod's advisory committee and approved by synod.[29] In the main body of the Synodical Interim Committee's supplementary report to Synod 1991, we get a glimpse of the Synodical Interim Committee's perspective on what needed doing early in the process.

> The Synodical Interim Committee decided to set the following process in motion, to be completed by June 1, 1993:
> A. Instruct the executive director of ministries to develop, in consultation with all the agencies, definitive mission and vision statements which will guide the ministries of the denomination.
> B. Direct all agencies at both staff and board levels to review their vision statements and submit any changes required to bring them in line with the overall statement of the denomination through the Ministries Advisory Council [later renamed the Ministries Coordinating Council].
> C. Direct all agencies to review their strategic plans in light of a process led by the Synodical Interim Committee and the executive director of ministries through the Ministries Advisory Council to ensure that all the issues of "overlap, gaps, and priorities" are addressed, with all the agency plans requiring the approval of the Synodical Interim Committee.
> D. Instruct all agencies to review the following in consultation with the Synodical Interim Committee and the executive director of ministries:
>   1. Board size and composition (regional representation with preservation of the principle of classical representation).
>   2. Combining/merging activities with other agencies.
>   3. Issues of effectiveness and efficiency, especially in the areas of support services.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 606)

After the basic details of the plan had been approved and the initial activities of the Synodical Interim Committee and the new position of executive director of ministries had been decided upon, the Synodical Interim Committee, with a mandate from synod, began to revise its own constitution to reflect its new responsibilities even as it continued to provide leadership while the search for an executive director of ministries ran its course. At the March 19-20, 1992, meeting of the Synodical Interim Committee Dr. Peter Borgdorff was selected as the single nominee to be presented to Synod 1992 for the executive director of ministries position. At that time he was serving as the executive director of World Ministries, a position that was itself scheduled to be incorporated into the executive director of ministries position. Synod 1992 completed the process by appointing Dr. Borgdorff,[30] and he began his service on July 1, 1992.

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[29]*Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 619-33, 777-81.

[30]*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 612-13, Art. 21, III; p. 637, Art. 37.

The transition to a more unified structure for denominational ministries came at a time when there was a great deal of conflict in the church. Some churches and members were unhappy with the decision of Synod 1990 about women in ecclesiastical office; others were equally unhappy about the decision of Synod 1992 which reversed the intent of Synod 1990 on the same issue. It seemed that the spirit in the church was fearful, sometimes inconsistent, and cautious. Agencies were also sensing a lack of enthusiasm among the church's membership for the denominational ministries, and contributions to these ministries dropped significantly. At its meeting on September 24-25, 1992, the Synodical Interim Committee was informed that agencies had reduced their previously approved budgets for fiscal year 1993 by 4.5 million, that a hiring freeze had been implemented, and that all salaries were frozen until further notice.[31]

As is to be expected, the 1991 statement of the Synodical Interim Committee's view of what had to be done toward restructuring was refined and placed in a different time frame. Nevertheless, the basics of that vision have remained and continue to be operative in the present.

A. *Ministries Coordinating Council*

One of the early developments after the appointment of the executive director of ministries was the formation of the Ministries Coordinating Council. At its first meeting, July 25, 1992, the Ministries Coordinating Council[32] adopted a number of initiatives to begin implementing the directives of synod and the Synodical Interim Committee. Certainly one of the most significant decisions of that first meeting was the appointment of several task forces to begin addressing specific issues for coordination. These task forces were Human Resources; Finance; Coordinated Services; and Communications, Development, and Church Relations. Even though not all the recommendations made by these task forces in the course of the next year were approved, many of the changes experienced since 1992 were initiated as a result of these recommendations.

When the Ministries Coordinating Council held its second meeting, in October 1992, it approved a recommendation to the Synodical Interim Committee that the membership[33] of the Ministries Coordinating Council be approved:

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[31]Synodical Interim Committee minutes of September 24-25, 1992, 1575, I, C.

[32]The persons who initially were part of the Ministries Coordinating Council were Rev. Harold Bode, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Mr. John De Haan, Dr. James De Jong, Dr. Anthony Diekema, Mr. Raymond Elgersma, Mr. Bing Goei, Rev. Leonard Hofman, Mr. Rudy Hulst, Mr. Al Karsten, Mr. Gary Mulder, Mr. David Radius, Rev. John Rozeboom, Rev. Louis Tamminga, Mr. Harry Vander Meer, Mr. David Vander Ploeg, Dr. Ray Vander Weele, Rev. William Van Tol, and Rev. Theodore Verseput. As indicated in the text, Ministries Coordinating Council's formal membership was selected from this group.

[33]The formal membership of the Ministries Coordinating Council as approved by the Synodical Interim Committee was Rev. Harold Bode, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Mr. John De Haan, Dr. James De Jong, Dr. Anthony Diekema, Mr. Raymond Elgersma, Rev. Leonard Hofman, Mr. Al Karsten, Mr. Gary Mulder, Rev. John Rozeboom, Mr. David Vander Ploeg, and Rev. William Van Tol. In most instances, Mr. Harry Vander Meer was present as denominational financial coordinator.

1. The executive directors of the larger agencies.
2. A member selected from among the smaller agencies.
3. Two members selected from among the staff in Burlington, Ontario.
4. The executive director of ministries as its chairman.
5. The general secretary as an ex officio member (without vote).

As the membership of the Ministries Coordinating Council is reviewed from the perspective of 1997, it should be noted that there has been significant turnover in five years. Rev. Louis Tamminga, Rev. Harold Bode, Rev. Leonard Hofman, and Dr. Anthony Diekema have all retired. Mr. David Vander Ploeg, Mr. Ray Elgersma, and Rev. William Van Tol have changed positions and are no longer involved in the Ministries Coordinating Council. The staff advisers to the Ministries Coordinating Council have also been in transition. Mr. Harry Vander Meer retired as the denominational financial coordinator in 1994,[34] when that position was renamed director of finance and administration. Mr. Robert Van Stright served first in that position from 1994-1997, when he returned to private business. In the spring of 1997 Mr. Kenneth Horjus was appointed to this position. In addition, Ms. Norma Coleman was appointed as the director of personnel in 1993 and by virtue of that position became a staff adviser to the Ministries Coordinating Council.

It is difficult to measure the impact of such staff changes, but they are clearly significant. Presently the Ministries Coordinating Council[35] members collectively have different experiences in denominational matters than was the case when the Ministries Coordinating Council was first formed. New insight without strong ties to the past can be significantly freeing. It is also true that one's sense of history and personal experience are important ingredients in providing leadership as expressed through the Ministries Coordinating Council.

The journey to date has been difficult for the Ministries Coordinating Council. It has been hard for MCC to carve out its identity as a leadership group, to develop collegial relationships with sometimes competing agencies, and to coalesce into a cooperative unit members who are accustomed to being leaders of agencies. There are many evidences that the Ministries Coordinating Council members are seeking to do what will best serve the mission of the church as a whole. At the same time, what is described here as a difficult journey is also intended to indicate that the Ministries Coordinating Council has a way to go. There is consensus that the Ministries Coordinating Council may not yet be what synod intended it to be when it was formed in 1992. Too often agencies or agency personnel support Ministries Coordinating Council decisions that are either low threat or agreeable to themselves and resist, even

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[34]Though Mr. Harry Vander Meer retired as the denominational financial coordinator, he then became the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., where he served with distinction until 1997.

[35]The 1997 membership of the Ministries Coordinating Council is Mr. John Kuyers, Dr. Gaylen Byker, Dr. James De Jong, Rev. John Rozeboom, Mr. Gary Mulder, Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, Mr. John De Haan, and Ms. Beth Swagman as agency directors; Mr. Wayne deJong and Mr. Al Karsten as Canadian staff; Dr. Peter Borgdorff as chairman; and Dr. David Engelhard as member ex officio (without vote). Ms. Norma Coleman and Mr. Kenneth Horjus serve the Ministries Coordinating Council as advisers.

ignore, decisions that are less agreeable. The complexity of the CRC agency structure requires the Ministries Coordinating Council to provide a clear administrative voice which is then supported by all the council members when they return to their individual responsibilities within the agencies and institutions they serve.

Despite these difficulties the Ministries Coordinating Council has managed to advance, for the first time in CRC history, a denominational ministries plan. It took five years, two rounds of listening conferences among the membership of the CRC, several strategic-planning events, and numerous meetings to produce a consensus document which includes a mission statement, a vision statement, major goals, and specific objectives. Synod 1997 approved the Vision and Mission Statement and endorsed the goals and objectives the agencies will pursue in cooperation with the congregations of the CRC. This is no small accomplishment, though it is recognized by the Ministries Coordinating Council that the real accomplishment is not in designing the plan but rather in the achieving, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the goals we have adopted. The Denominational Ministry Plan as presently written will take us to the tenth anniversary (2002) of the Ministries Coordinating Council's efforts.

Part of the reason the development of the Denominational Ministry Plan took a significant amount of time is that it involves a ministry paradigm shift that should be noted. It reflects a significantly increased commitment of agency staff members to collaborative ministries and integrated efforts. The hope is, of course, that this shift signals a change away from an environment of agency competition to one of cooperation and mutual support. Even as we encourage and applaud this shift, it is our prayer that the Lord will be honored through such efforts.

To best accomplish its coordinating and administrative role, the Ministries Coordinating Council has been organized into several teams. Almost from the beginning in 1992 there has been a Canadian counterpart to the Ministries Coordinating Council, though technically this Canadian group functions as a subgroup of the Ministries Coordinating Council. The Canadian counterpart is called the Canadian Ministries Advancement Team,[36] and increasingly this leadership group is assuming responsibility for dealing with the ministries of the CRC in the Canadian context. In fact, it is noteworthy that the synodically approved report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada grants this staff group significant standing in the new Canadian structure. This development does not reflect less emphasis being placed on the need to interface the Canadian and U.S. ministries in a binational denominational context. What it does reflect is that the Burlington-based staff is increasingly assuming responsibility for developing interagency approaches to denominational ministries in the Canadian context.

The Ministries Coordinating Council has also established a Ministries Team, which is essentially the program-review team of all the ministries that fall under the Ministries Coordinating Council's influence. There are also a

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[36]The Canadian Ministries Advancement Team is composed of the following persons: Mr. Al Karsten, Mr. Wayne deJong, Mr. Terry Veldboom, Rev. John Van Til, Mr. Ben Vandezande, Rev. Siebert Van Houten, Dr. Calvin Bremer, Mr. Gary Mulder, Mr. Keith Knight, Rev. Arie Van Eek, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

number of subteams that have more detailed assignments (e.g., Eastern European Ministries Team, Classical Renewal Ministries Team, Church in Society Team, etc.), all of which are multiagency based. Their respective mandates are inclusive of all CRC ministry activity within a geographical region or specific programmatic function.

There are also other Ministries Coordinating Council subteams (e.g., Advancement Council, Korean Ministries Relation Team, etc.), some of which report not only to the Ministries Coordinating Council but also directly to the Board of Trustees. It is not necessary to detail the fine points here but only to suggest that the intricacies of organization are determined by history, culture, political realities, and functional necessity. The assignments given to teams do not necessarily follow clear and clean organizational lines.

B. The Board of Trustees

After Synod 1992 the Synodical Interim Committee's functions were immediately changed. The Synodical Interim Committee assumed the functions of a board in September 1992. The name of the Synodical Interim Committee was not changed to the Board of Trustees until the provisional adoption of the constitution and bylaws by Synod 1993. As could be expected, there was an initial flurry of activity as the Board of Trustees began to address a backlog of issues that had been awaiting action until synod had decided on the recommendations received in various reports. Inevitably there was also a period of ambiguity as the Board of Trustees defined its role relative to the existing agency boards. In retrospect, synod's introduction of new governance and administrative structures without dissolving any of the old systems made the transition significantly more complex. It appears that the old systems were left in place, to a significant degree, because it was thought that such dual systems would provide good checks and balances. Clearly it would also prevent too much power from residing in the hands of too few people. That fear and the desirability of the present organizational overlaps can still be heard in discussions today. At the same time, one needs to remember that both the Vision 21 Committee (1987) and the Structure Review Committee (1990) tried to prevent the development of this organizational bifurcation and its accompanying ambiguity.

The Synodical Interim Committee, as it drafted the constitution and bylaws, tried to clarify its authority and role with respect to the remaining agency boards. Special attention was given to the need for the Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary boards of trustees to retain a greater measure of independent authority[37] than was needed by the agencies of the church. The Board of Trustees also had to find its own comfort zone with the new authority synod had entrusted to it. The change from being an interim committee to becoming a group of trustees was significant, and it brought its own challenges. The Board was created not only to exercise authority but also to engage in advocacy in the church for the agencies and institutions and to ensure coordination and integration of the ministries. Increasingly the Board has been finding its comfort zone and continues to develop its task.

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[37]Provisions for this greater need for independent authority is described in greater detail in both the Constitution and the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees.

That is not to suggest that the agencies and their administrative personnel were immediately comfortable with the presence of the Board of Trustees. There were rumblings at agency board meetings about the agencies having lost their independence and among some administrative personnel who suggested that the Board of Trustees and the executive director of ministries were exercising authority beyond that intended by synod. It should be noted, however, that each time such rumblings and suggestions reached synod, they were turned back and synod sustained the role of the Board of Trustees in implementing the new structure.

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America[38] were formally presented to Synod 1993 and were provisionally approved for a period of three years. "Provisionally" was added by an amendment from the floor of synod primarily because some synodical delegates were concerned that agencies might be marginalized. The Board of Trustees was instructed to propose any revisions, after consulting with the agencies, to Synod 1996. The Board of Trustees complied with that instruction and resubmitted the constitution and bylaws, with several revisions, to Synod 1996. The most significant change in the 1996 edition of the constitution and bylaws is the official declaration that the CRC is and shall conduct itself as a binational denomination in the United States and Canada. Synod gave its approval to the Board of Trustees' proposals, and future revisions are now subject to the procedure described in the constitution and bylaws.

The Board of Trustees already in 1992 organized itself into three committees. The Polity Committee was assigned responsibility for most of the ecclesiastical functions formerly associated with the Synodical Interim Committee and the responsibilities of the general secretary. The Program and Finance Committee was assigned responsibility for the functions of the former standing synodical Finance Committee, the newly assigned responsibility for providing oversight of the agencies and institutions of synod, and the responsibilities of the executive director of ministries . The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees was assigned responsibility for interim functions between the meetings of the Board of Trustees, personnel functions of the Board of Trustees (including the supervision of the general secretary and the executive director of ministries), and the function of serving as the Board of Trustees' Compensation Administration Committee. In addition, since the CRC is organized corporately in both the state of Michigan and in the province of Ontario, the Canadian Board of Trustees members fulfill the corporate responsibilities of a registered Canadian charity and the requirements of the joint-venture agreement that exists between the Michigan and Ontario corporate entities.

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[38]The membership of the first Board of Trustees was Rev. A. Jongsma, chairman; Rev. J. Vos, vice chairman; Mr. E. Vander Wall; Dr. J. Van Schepen; Rev. J. Joldersma; Mr. H. Vermeer; Dr. K. Bootsma (chairman 1994); Dr. H. Eldersveld; Mr. N. Gritter; Dr. A. Schoonveld (chairman 1995-1997); Mr. Wm. Weidenaar; Rev. W. Witte; Rev. V. Geurkink; Rev. B. Nederlof; Mr. K. Terpstra; and Mr. D. Wiersma. Rev. L.J. Hofman and Dr. P. Borgdorff were the ex officio members.

The initial Board of Trustees in 1992 had sixteen (16) elected members plus two (2) ex officio members (without vote). The Board of Trustees[39] is presently composed of nineteen (19) elected members and two ex officio members (without vote). Thirteen (13) of the elected members reside in the United States, and six (6) reside in Canada. Sixteen (16) of the elected members are chosen from defined denominational regions, and three (3) of the elected members are chosen at large. The ex officio members (without vote) are the general secretary and the executive director of ministries.

The Board of Trustees has concentrated its efforts on being an oversight board on behalf of synod, approving interagency policy, approving the overall budget of the denominational ministries, and involving itself in the operations of the agencies and their personnel only on an as-needed basis. The Board of Trustees has been active in reviewing and approving agency reorganization matters (e.g., the formation of Pastoral Ministries and the restructuring of interagency administrative support systems). For the most part, the Board of Trustees exercises its oversight by reviewing the work of the general secretary and the executive director of ministries. It accomplishes its work with the agencies and institutions primarily through the office of the executive director of ministries. The specific responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are fully described in the bylaws of the Board of Trustees (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 67-74).

C. Administrative changes

Earlier a reference was made to the formation of four (4) task forces in 1992 which were asked to identify desirable organizational changes, especially those which would enhance the use of agency resources and reduce duplication and overlap in administrative support systems. Many (though not all) of the changes that have been implemented, and even those still being planned, can be traced to the recommendations of the four task forces. Some other changes came about through other normal organizational developments, and some were implemented in anticipation of certain directions that became clear over time. While the changes made have been significant in the effort to be more efficient with denominational resources, many of the changes were in the area of support services and, therefore, were means to certain ends, not ends in themselves. The primary intent of all the changes discussed in this report is that we be about the mission of God in a way that best reflects his intent and a healthy understanding of the church we serve. For reasons of simplicity we will deal with the four task forces one at a time.

1. Human Resources (later called Personnel)

   In 1992 each agency had its own personnel procedures, some of them formalized (e.g., CRC Publications, World Missions, and Home Missions), others informal (e.g., no written policies or specific personnel procedures). As a result, practices in compensation, working conditions, benefits, and expectations varied significantly even among agencies sharing the same

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[39]The present membership of the Board of Trustees is Mr. Wm. Weidenaar, chairman; Rev. J. Kuipers, vice chairman; Rev. R. Slim; Dr. T. Van Groningen; Rev. A. Kuiper; Mr. H. Van Maanen; Dr. A. Hoksbergen; Dr. A. Schoonveld; Mr. H. Johnson; Ms. K. Smith; Rev. D. Kelderman; Rev. S. Workman; Rev. G. Pols; Mr. J. H. Vander Stoep; Rev. P. Brouwer; Dr. Wm. Vanden Born; Dr. C. Rottman; Ms. J. Vander Ploeg; and Mr. Wm. Wildeboer; ex officio (without vote): Dr. D. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff.

office facility. The assumption was that a person was employed by an agency or institution, each of which made its own rules. The Human Resources task force quickly concluded that an untenable situation had developed and that uniform personnel policies, practices, and procedures should be introduced. This recommendation led to the decision to establish an Office of Personnel, which eventually would serve all the agencies but not the educational institutions of the CRC. Ms. Norma Coleman joined the denominational staff as director of personnel in December of 1993.

Establishing uniform personnel policies and procedures has been a challenging undertaking. The Ministries Coordinating Council has the authority to make decisions that are binding on the agencies and exercised that authority in the adoption of the *Employee Manual*. Generally speaking, however, on a day-to-day basis the Office of Personnel functions as a resource for the administrative personnel of the various agencies.

The service orientation of the Office of Personnel does not minimize the progress that has been made in developing uniform policies and procedures. A listing of achievements might be helpful:

a. Recruitment procedures and assistance.
b. Performance-evaluation procedures for all personnel.
c. Single-source benefit administration.
d. The development of a common *Employee Manual*.
e. The inclusion of all personnel (except international staff) into standard personnel systems.
f. The development of a uniform compensation system.
g. An identifiable place for personnel to voice concerns.
h. Assumption of CRC Publications' personnel matters when personnel assistant left.
i. An intentional effort to develop a "ministry culture" representing the CRC instead of an "agency culture."

There is more to be done. Following is a list of things yet to be achieved:

a. Inclusion of international staff.
b. Development of uniform compensation for international staff.
c. More effective recruitment procedures.
d. Greater compliance among the agencies in sensitive personnel issues.
e. Personnel training in employee sensitivities (ethnic, workplace, etc.).
f. Personnel training in personal benefits (retirement issues, life choices, etc.).
g. Personnel training in work-related functions.

2. Finance

The history of denominational financial management is that each agency did its own. Only in the last twenty (20) years or so has there been a development toward a central office for denominational finances. Mr. Anthony Vroon was the first denominational financial coordinator. He was followed by Mr. Harry Vander Meer, who served in that capacity until his retirement in 1994. The task force recommended that this function be strengthened to become that of chief financial officer for the denomination. This significant change was made when it was decided that the former denominational finance coordinator would become the director of finance

and administration. The administration component was added to the position's title because the position includes responsibility for supervising various centralized support functions.[40] Mr. Robert Van Stright was the first to occupy this newly defined position when he joined the denominational staff in April 1994. He served through December 1996. Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus assumed the office in April 1997 and is its current occupant. A listing of significant staff changes associated with financial management, some of which were the result of task-force recommendations, might be helpful:

a. CRWRC's Merle Grevengoed retires and is not replaced.
b. CRC Publications' Alvin Van Zee unexpectedly passes away and is not replaced.
c. Common fiscal year is agreed to and implemented (1994).
d. Uniform budget procedures are implemented (1994).
e. Common cash-management system is developed (1994).
f. Common insurance plan is adopted (1994).
g. Common travel policy and procedures are adopted (1994).
h. Plan is drafted for the consolidation of all financial services for the agencies (4/15/97).
i. Consolidation plan is implemented with a further reduction in staff of at least two additional persons (7/1/97).
j. Consolidation of ministry-share receipts is developed for implementation (1/1/98).

There is still more to be done, but significant progress has been made. Mr. Harry Vander Meer created the climate for cooperation; Mr. Robert Van Stright initiated the changes that were needed; Mr. Ken Horjus is putting systems in place and giving the leadership needed to achieve our goals. As important as the contributions made by the various finance directors are those made by Mr. Chris Cok and other members of the finance staff, who have absorbed the changes and made them happen. Finally, these changes have been encouraged and facilitated by a variety of volunteer professionals such as Dr. Shirley Roels, Mr. Milton Kuyers, Mr. William Terpstra, and others who have given generously of their time and skills.

3. Coordinated Services
There had been a department by this name for some years prior to the appointment of this task force. This department provided centralized mailing, copying, some information systems, facilities maintenance, and a few other support services. It was felt, however, that a complete integrated support-service system should be developed that would allow agencies to focus on their primary mission, would develop an economy of scale, and would centralize all support functions shared by the agencies. The following were implemented as a result of the task force's recommendations:

a. The information system's hardware and software were standardized.
b. The printing plant, graphic design, and project management were transferred from CRC Publications to Denominational Services.
c. Some of the purchasing was centralized.

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[40]Such centralized support functions include Product Services, Information Systems Services, and Building and Grounds Maintenance.

d. Common imaging was developed and implemented.
e. Space-utilization procedures were implemented.
f. Common office hours and building procedures were developed and implemented.
g. All communication systems were standardized and maintained by one source.

4. Communications, Development, and Church Relations

The most difficult and conflictual area in the reorganization process has been the activity associated with communications, development (fund-raising), and church relations. This is probably true because communications and donor/church relations touch the soul of an agency. It is only natural that an organization wants to tell its own story, do its own relationship building, and exercise its control over the way funds are raised. With the exception of CRWRC, each of the agencies and institutions also receives support through ministry shares, but most of the contact with churches and donors comes through above-ministry-share efforts.

What adds to the complexity and conflict in this area is the fact that the churches, as well as many individuals, frequently express the desire for a more coordinated approach in communications. Efforts made to develop and strengthen such coordinated efforts have met with only limited success. The Canadian office staff have made the most progress. *CRC Source* was first proposed by them, an idea that was then implemented for all of the agencies binationally. *CRC Source* is an agency news periodical seeking to tell the story of all of the CRC ministries rather than have each agency tell its own story. It was expected that this joint publication would significantly reduce the number of agency publications. That has simply not happened. There has been a slight reduction, but not nearly what had been expected.

In fairness to the agencies involved, it needs to be pointed out that publishing newsletters, magazines, informational pieces, and so forth is part of a larger strategy to inform the churches and their members and to solicit support for the ministries of the agencies. It is often said that if an agency is to be its own fund-raiser, then it must also have the freedom to do what needs to be done to be effective.

No effort has been made to consolidate the activities of the church-relations offices which are now resident within several of the agencies. Not all of the agencies have separate offices for church relations, but nearly all have the function within their organization. The question that needs to be answered is why these functions exist. If such activities exist primarily for the benefit of the agency, then perhaps the cost of maintaining such offices or functions is simply the cost of doing business. An alternative point of view is that church-relations offices really exist to serve the congregations of the denomination. According to that view, church-relations offices exist to make the participation of local churches in denominational ministries more meaningful. Financial support follows vision and relationships. That is how it should be, and that is our goal.

The last area to be addressed in this section is that of joint fund-raising. Perspectives vary widely on this subject, and viewpoints are strongly held. On the one hand, there are those who hold the position that a united campaign would be the death knell of ministry support in the CRC. It is

argued that people do not want to contribute to the big pot, and the decline in ministry-share contributions is cited as evidence for this viewpoint. On the other hand, there are those who say that people contribute to ministry rather than to agencies or projects, and the boards and personnel who are close to the ministries can best allocate the gifts as needed and as the priorities are established. To date, other than what became known as the Fellowship Fund (which is now called the CRC Foundation), fund-raising is done on an agency-by-agency basis. This is difficult for the smaller agencies because they really can't afford the cost of professional development people. Among the larger agencies there is the inevitable competition for the support of the church's membership, especially among those donors that have discretionary giving ability. Various task forces, as well as the work of the Advancement Council, have addressed development and above-ministry-share solicitation with some measure of success. A great deal of work needs yet to be done as we sort through these issues and come to a clear direction for the future.

That is not to say that nothing has happened in the area of development and church relations. A listing may help:

a. A common display for conventions/conferences, etc., has been developed.
b. There have been several fund-raising projects with the participation of several agencies.
c. *CRC Source* is being published.
d. Several joint videos have been produced.
e. A joint communication strategy is being implemented in Canada.
f. There have been a number of exploratory initiatives.

What needs further attention includes the following:

a. A communication office that will service all of the ministries and agencies of the CRC.
b. A church-relations office that will service all of the ministries and agencies of the CRC.
c. Integrated video productions that focus on wholistic ministry.
d. A development program that will give churches and individual donors the choice of how their gifts are directed.
e. Unified publications and imaging of the ministries of the CRC.

All of the above does not fully chronicle the efforts to coordinate ministries that have been made. The agencies and institutions support the work of the Office of Social Justice and World Hunger as mandated by Synod 1993. World Missions and World Relief have mutually agreed to provide pastoral care for international staff. Home Missions and CRC Publications cooperate in providing published resources for congregational ministries. Several agencies cooperate in CRC Publications' World Literature Ministries. The Ministries Coordinating Council played a significant role in encouraging Home Missions to reemphasize the importance of ministry on the campuses of universities in North America. Finally, The Back to God Hour provides video-production capability for all of the CRC's ministries. All of these examples are evidences that we are moving in the right direction and that synod's intent is being pursued and implemented.

VII. The future: What's ahead

The best way to anticipate what the future will bring is to look at the decisions being made today. The CRC has decided that it desires more effective and more efficient ministries. Synod also decided that such denominational ministry should be articulated and set forth in a denominational ministries plan. Finally, it has become a value in the CRC that agencies engage themselves in cooperative and complementary ministry activities and minimize competition. Much of the reorganization activity of the past five years has been guided by at least one of these challenges. To be sure, some have suggested that there has been too much focus on organizational concerns or too much activity in the consolidation of agency functions. It needs to be noted, however, that simultaneously a denominational ministries plan has been developed which is ambitious indeed. It is my position that a ministry plan without the infrastructure to carry it out will be a plan that remains on the shelf. Once the infrastructure is in place (and much of it is) and the ministry plan has been given form, we should see significant progress toward giving it life and toward sharing the values the church holds dear.

In ministry I expect that we will see more wholistic programs as we do the work to which the Lord has called us. There will be less emphasis on agency identity, ways of doing things, and even member loyalties. It is more likely that the overall program, rather than the individual organization, will capture center stage. Geography will also have less meaning. As the world shrinks toward the reality of being a global village, as the concept of a world economy takes root, and as increasingly we face the realities of urbanization all over the globe, we will find that new ways of working and communicating will emerge. Independence will diminish, and interdependence will increase. Ministry agencies and institutions will contribute specialties like the spokes of a wheel, but increasingly they will share the axle and help move the wheel for which they are spokes in the same direction. I believe that such combined effort will vastly improve our effectiveness and will make us more efficient with the limited resources we have.

Continuing organizational development, therefore, should be evaluated in the light of what we think is ahead. If ministry is our goal and interdependence is our chosen ministry style, then our organizational models will need to reflect that choice. To that end we are committed, because we believe that God desires it to be so.

Organizational development is not the primary mission of the Christian Reformed Church. It is the tool we use to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the Lord and his people. To that end we dream, and plan, and implement. To God be the glory!

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Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries

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Appendix B
Revised Mandate for the Canadian Ministries Board

If the proposed new structure is adopted, the Canadian Ministries Board mandate will need alteration from what appears in the *Agenda for Synod 1997* and the *Acts of Synod 1997.* Below are the suggested changes in the CMB mandate (changes are shaded). The U.S.-based ministries will be governed under the mandate of the binational Board of Trustees (Michigan Corporation). The language is intentionally the same in both cases except for customization to fit the particular political jurisdiction.

I. Mandate for the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB)

A. Primary functions

On behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and within the policies of the Board of Trustees (binational), the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB) shall be responsible for all the ministries conducted by the agencies and committees of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada and ministries performed internationally on behalf of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada.

Such responsibilities shall include but not be limited to the following:

1. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be the legal agent in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church in North America and a registered federally chartered charity in Canada.

2. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be the agent of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and its Board of Trustees (binational) for all matters that pertain to the Canadian ministries of the CRC.

3. The Canadian Ministries Board shall participate in the exercise of mutual accountability with the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (binational) for the overall ministry of the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church.

4. The Canadian Ministries Board shall collect and distribute information for the enhancement of ministry in Canada to the churches and classes in Canada and advise them concerning the same.

5. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be the convening agent of the Triennial Conference of representatives of Christian Reformed churches and classes in Canada for the purpose of envisioning the ministries the Canadian Christian Reformed churches have in common within the Canadian context. Such a conference may, from time to time, be convened as an interclassical assembly under the authority of Article 44-b of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church. When such a conference is convened under Article 44-b, the Canadian Ministries Board shall request one of the Canadian classes to be the convening assembly.

6. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be the agent for all joint-venture and agency agreements between itself and its related entities and the Board of

Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (binational) and its related entities.

7. The Canadian Ministries Board shall appoint a Canadian ministries director (CMD), whose appointment is subject to ratification by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

8. The Canadian Ministries Board shall direct and supervise the Canadian ministries director in the performance of his/her office in all matters under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Ministries Board. The supervision of the Canadian ministries director shall be done in cooperation with the executive director of ministries (EDM), who shall exercise administrative oversight on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church.

9. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be responsible for ecumenical relationships within Canada, for which the Canadian ministries director is the appointed spokesperson.

10. The Canadian Ministries Board shall fulfill all other functions assigned to it by the specific instruction of synod or described in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

11. The Canadian Ministries Board shall report to synod through the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church.

B. Specific responsibilities

Note 1: A number of items recorded on pages 405-07 of the *Agenda for Synod 1997* have now been incorporated into the "Primary functions" section above.

1. Approving all budgets and allocations of financial resources for all denominational ministries in Canada within the context and with the concurrence of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

2. Approving the initiation of all new ministry proposals requiring denominational resources within Canada or requiring resources collected within Canada.

3. Approving the appointment of all senior denominational staff members in Canada.

4. Assuring the collaboration of ministries in Canada with appropriate agencies and committees in the United States.

5. Arranging for a plan of regional ministry teams in consultation with the classes located within each region.

6. Presenting an annual account of its work to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church as a part of a similar report by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church.

Note 2: It is understood that, if decisions made by the Canadian Ministries Board are binational in scope and not limited to ministry or staff in Canada, they will be recommended to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for approval.

C. Composition

1. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be made up of one (1) member from each of the classes of the CRC in Canada and three (3) members-at-large. The classical representatives shall be ratified by synod before serving; the members-at-large shall be nominated by the Canadian Ministries Board and elected by synod in a manner specified in the Rules for Synodical Procedure. All terms of service shall be governed by the rules of synod. Each person elected to serve shall have an appointed alternate, whose appointment shall also be governed by the rules of synod.

2. The classical representatives shall be equally selected from among deacons, elders, and ordained staff of the church on a rotation schedule determined in advance. The qualifications for the elders and deacons are that they must have served at least one term in the office classification for which they are nominated. They need not be currently in office.

3. The Canadian Ministries Board shall appoint such committees as it from time to time shall determine. It is understood that the committee structure will usually parallel the committee structure of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, as mutually agreed upon.

4. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be served in the fulfillment of its mandate by the Canadian ministries director, the executive director of ministries, and the general secretary as appropriate to their respective functions within the framework of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The aforementioned staff members will attend all meetings as required and will have the privilege of the floor in all matters that pertain to their respective responsibilities. Additional staff members may be called upon to assist the Canadian Ministries Board as needed.

D. Triennial Conference

1. Convening the conference
   The Triennial Conference shall be convened every third year by the Canadian Ministries Board for the purpose of ministry visioning around a theme selected by the Canadian Ministries Board.

2. Budget provisions
   Budget provisions shall be made for the convening of the conference by the Canadian Ministries Board.

3. Guidelines for the Triennial Conference
   In response to the discussion at the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) meeting on November 11-12, 1996, in Winnipeg, the following are suggested guidelines for the organization of the first Triennial Conference:

   a. Agenda
      1) Core of the agenda
         a) Sharing and planning strategies for ministry
         b) Discussion of matters to be considered by the leadership of the CRC in Canada

Although the conference ought to include celebration and equipping for ministry, the central focus must remain on the development of ministry in Canada.

2) All churches and ministries of the church will be encouraged to suggest and recommend that which will contribute to the upbuilding of the church in Canada. Items to be placed on the agenda will come by way of recommendation or overture through
   a) Regional conferences
   b) Classes to which Canadian churches belong
   c) The Canadian Ministries Board

b. Participants
   1) This conference is a gathering of the church, though not an ecclesiastical assembly as defined by the Church Order. Therefore, it should be open to a wide spectrum of participants. We recommend the following:
      a) Staff as assigned by the Canadian ministries director and Canadian Ministries Board (nonvoting participants)
      b) Up to five (voting) delegates from each regional conference
      c) Up to five (voting) delegates from each classis, all of whom are presently involved in some significant ministry within the boundaries of classis
      d) Nonvoting participants who choose to come
   2) Because of a desire to ensure adequate participation from various sectors of the church, the Canadian Ministries Board may invite others to participate. For example, CMB should include some native peoples or young people in the dialogue.

c. Process
   Through small groups and plenary sessions, a discussion process will lead to resolutions. These resolutions will be voted on by voting delegates. Once adopted, these (nonbinding) resolutions will go to the Canadian Ministries Board, which in turn will pass them on to the churches, classes, synod, boards, and committees, as appropriate. Added to these resolutions will be the ways and means that individuals, assemblies, and organizations can take further action on these matters.

d. Cost
   Developing a budget for and funding the Triennial Conference is the responsibility of the Canadian Ministries Board. It is recommended that the primary funding for the costs of delegates to this grass-roots meeting ought to be the responsibility of local assemblies and organizations. Funding possibilities include resources from the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church, the Canadian Ministries Board budget, classes, various ministries and congregations, and other sources as appropriate.

4. Church Order Article 44-b and the Triennial Conference
   In 1967 the synod of the CRCNA adopted an agreement of cooperation among the classes of the CRC in Canada. With the formation of the Canadian Ministries Board, the ministry of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada will be integrated into the regular structure

of the CRCNA. The mandate, jurisdiction, and authority granted to the CCRCC will no longer be required.

However, there may be occasions when an ecclesiastical assembly of Canadian classes will be required to make a final decision. Reasons for this may include the requirements of Canadian law, ecumenical relationships in Canada, and particular ministry in the Canadian context. Although we do not see a regular meeting under Church Order Article 44-b as an ordinary method of decision making, we believe that this option should be open to the Canadian churches.

The following policy will guide the Canadian churches in structuring themselves as an ecclesiastical assembly under Church Order Article 44-b:

a. The Canadian Ministries Board will recommend to synod that an assembly of Canadian classes take place. Such a recommendation will include the time and place of meeting (either at the same time and place as synod or at a Triennial Conference) and the agenda (mandate).

b. Synod will approve such an assembly, providing the mandate, jurisdiction, and authority required.

c. The Canadian Ministries Board will make appropriate arrangements for such a gathering to take place either at synod or at a Triennial Conference.

d. Ordinarily, such a gathering will consist of the Canadian delegates to synod or a selection of the participants at a Triennial Conference. Ordinarily these delegates will include a minister, an elder, and a deacon from each classis.

e. Alternatively, Canadian classes may overture synod to mandate the Canadian Ministries Board to call such an assembly.

II. Mandate for the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (binational) relative to U.S.-based ministries

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (binational) is constituted and shall be responsible for binational governance as defined in the constitution and bylaws of the Board and specifically for ministries based in the U.S. This provision for governance is recommended instead of the appointment of a separate U.S. Ministries Board.

Essentially the functions assigned to the Canadian Ministries Board for ministry in Canada are assigned to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church for ministries based in the U.S.

Appendix C
Financial Analysis of Restructuring Proposals

1997 Actual Denominational Board Costs in U.S. Dollars

Board meetings	$156,200
Executive-committee meetings	$ 88,200
TOTAL GOVERNANCE COSTS	**$244,400**
Total board attendances*	326
Total executive-committee attendances*	248

(*Attendances = number of attendees times number of meetings)

Average cost per board attendance	$479
Average cost per executive-committee attendance	$356

Estimated Future Board and Council Costs after Reorganization (in constant U.S. dollars)

Board of Trustees costs	
Full Board (53 members)	
3 meetings at $479 per attendance	$ 76,161
Board Administrative Committee costs (11 members)	
3 meetings at $356 per attendance	$ 11,748
Ministry-council costs	
6 councils, each averaging 14 members = 84 attendees	
2 meetings at $479 per attendance	**$ 80,472**
ESTIMATED GOVERNANCE COSTS	**$168,381**

1997 Regional Costs by Agency in U.S. Dollars

	Personnel	**Programs**	**Total**
CRCNA	$ 20,000	—-	$ 20,000
Home Missions	$777,282	$3,819,687	$4,596,969
Pastoral Ministries	$106,000	—-	$ 106,000
CRC Publications	$ 47,000	—-	$ 47,000
World Missions	$124,400	—-	$ 124,400
World Relief	$447,000	$ 467,573	$ 914,573
TOTAL COSTS	**$1,521,682**	**$4,287,260**	**$5,808,942**

Canadian Ministries Costs (in Canadian Dollars)

	1996 Actual	**1997 Actual**	**1998 Budget***	**1999 Budget***
CCRCC administration and programming	$290,662	$286,207	$322,680	$379,003
Electronic ministries	$167,976	$153,059	$208,655	$216,402
Native ministries	$438,215	$436,400	$636,373	$636,373
Canadian Ministries Board				$ 60,000
Standing ministry committees				$ 30,000
Regional centers				$ 50,000
TOTAL COSTS	**$ 896,853**	**$ 875,666**	**$1,167,718**	**$1,371,778**

*Expenses are tailored to actual income, which historically has been below budgeted levels.

Appendix D
Implementation Document

The document which follows is information for synod regarding implementation. However, since some flexibility in implementation will be needed, it is not a document on which the U.S. Structure Committee expects that synod will choose to vote.

The initial steps should occur within the classes and the Board of Trustees. For the proposed organization to function and to bring about the benefits desired, the changes at both ends of the organizational spectrum must commence at the same time. We see the following as the initial steps:

I. Formation of the classical ministries committees

Each classis will be asked to appoint its classical ministries committee at the fall classis meetings following the synod that approves the restructuring plan. By then, agency and denominational personnel can develop information to assist in the start-up of these new classical ministries committees. For example, in regional meetings some classes which already have ministry plans could present those plans and explain the process through which they were developed. In that context delegates could discuss what worked, what didn't work, and some of the key issues to be addressed. In other classes an agency or denominational person with the appropriate experience could meet locally with the classis to begin forming a classical ministries committee.

Procedurally, each classical ministries committee would report back to its classis with a preliminary integrated classical-ministries plan in the fall of 2000 if Synod 1999 approves the restructuring plan. This timing would allow for input from the classis and discussion with the agencies prior to the completion of ministry plans for the 2001-2002 ministry year. Classes that are not able to meet this timetable could communicate more fully in the subsequent year.

The following is the suggested mandate and structure for a classical ministries committee:

A. Purposes
The purposes of the classical ministries committee include the following:

1. To nurture vision and related planning within the classis by

   a. Assessing the current state of the classis and its churches.
   b. Developing a mission statement and plans for the classis and its emerging and established churches.
   c. Serving existing classical committees with consultation, advice, and expertise in accord with the vision, classical ministries plan, and mission statement of the classis.

2. To link classical/local church plans and denominational plans by

   a. Recommending ministry proposals to the classis.
   b. Processing reports from the Board of Trustees and the various agency ministries and providing feedback on behalf of the classis to them.
   c. Preparing nominations for the CRC Board of Trustees and recommending members for agency ministry councils.

3. To resource local churches and the classis by

   a. Identifying local talent and connecting it with ministry opportunities within the classis.
   b. Supporting officebearers and local leadership within the classis.
   c. In consultation with regional ministry developers, organizing conferences, workshops, seminars, and other training opportunities to develop local leadership.
   d. Collaborating with other classical ministries committees on cooperative joint ventures.

4. To communicate with churches and the denomination by

   a. Preparing classical ministries information for newsletters within the classis.
   b. Informing churches of prayer concerns.
   c. Encouraging churches to use denominational resources.
   d. Communicating the needs and aspirations of local churches to denominational agencies.

B. Structure and composition

The classical ministries committee should have at least seven members. They should include the following: the classical delegate to the CRC Board of Trustees (ex officio), a representative from the classical interim committee, one representative each from the various classical committees, a representative of the diaconal community within the classis, one or two members-at-large.

II. Formation of the classically based Board of Trustees

The classically based Board of Trustees should be functional after Synod 2000. If the U.S. Structure Committee's report is adopted in 1999, this schedule would allow for the classes and denominational personnel to work together for a year in forming the larger Board of Trustees.

The committee believes that a Board of Trustees nomination process could be conducted over the 1999-2000 fiscal year, with input from each classis. Classes that already have one of their members on the existing Board of Trustees would be given the option of retaining those members or naming two new nominees. Each classis would recommend two qualified individuals for nomination to the new Board of Trustees, one clergy member and one lay person. The suggested nomination form in Chart 7 illustrates the type of information that would be helpful in the formation of the new Board of Trustees. Space is provided for explaining why the individual nominated would make a good Board of Trustees member and on which Board of Trustees' committees this nominee could best serve.

NOMINATION FORM FOR CRC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Classis ___ Name of nominee ___
Address and Telephone number of nominee ___
Proposed for (please check one):
a. ___ Classis board representative
b. ___ Classis board alternate
c. ___ At-large board member
Church Information: ___ CRC
a. Member of ___
b. ___ Ordained ___ Non-ordained
c. Previous experience as:
___ Elder
___ Deacon
___ Other congregational ministries (describe below)
___
___
Classical or denominational experience:
___
___
Other experiences qualifying nominee as a board member:
___
___
Board committee(s) on which nominee could best serve:
a. ___ Ministry-Development Committee
b. ___ Church and Government-relations Committee
c. ___ Administrative Committee
d. ___ Global-Ministries Committee
e. ___ North American Ministries Committee
Personal information
a. Age ___
b. Occupation ___
Other comments about why nominee would be a qualified board member:
___
___
In case of questions, please contact:
Name ___
Phone number ___

Each classis would also be asked to consider nominating one of its members who would be appropriate for one of the six at-large Board of Trustees positions.

Procedures could be worked out regarding membership of the current Canadian Ministries Board and the Canadian Board of Trustees to blend their expertise and plan Board of Trustees representation.

The current Board of Trustees or Synod 1999 would appoint a committee to review the nominations and select a suggested slate of board members, one of the nominations from each classis to be selected as the board member and the other as the alternate. The nominating committee would be expected to seek the appropriate balance between clergy and lay nominees. To allow the committee time to do its work, nominations from the classes would be required by November 1, 1999.

The committee's report would need to be completed by January 15, 2000, to circulate to the classes in the spring. Action on the nominations would then be taken by Synod 2000.

Under this scenario the current Board of Trustees would conclude with the new Board of Trustees' initial meeting in the fall of 2000. At this fall meeting the old and new Board of Trustees could meet to facilitate the transition and discuss ministries and continuing issues. At this meeting the committee assignments for the new Board of Trustees could be discussed and approved.

Finally, if such a plan is approved, the U.S. Structure Committee suggests that all members of the new Board of Trustees serve an initial three-year term.

After that, the staggering of terms would begin. Those that are reelected would continue for either one-, two-, or three-year terms. Such a plan would allow for continuity during the organizational restructuring and a healthy turnover of board members.

III. Formation of agency ministry councils

Each agency's ministry council would include twelve to sixteen CRC members chosen for their heart for, interest in, and talent related to a specific agency's ministry. While these members may be chosen for both expertise and geographic balance, at least 25 percent of each council's membership should be Canadian. This distribution will enhance the binational character of the denominational ministries at the operating level.

The Board of Trustees, working with the Ministries Administrative Team, would shape these new councils. Together they should seek broad, diverse representation. All classes should have opportunity to suggest members for these councils. Their suggestions could be offered at the same time the classes are nominating their members for the new Board of Trustees. Concurrent nominations would permit Synod 2000 to review the formation and membership of the ministry councils at the same time the new Board of Trustees is formed. Such an approach should provide assurance to synod, classes, and local congregations that the new organizational structure is balanced and qualified before the current structure is replaced. A sample nomination form for ministry-council members is shown in Chart 8.

Chart 8:
Sample Ministry-Council
Nomination Form

NOMINATION FORM FOR CRC MINISTRY COUNCILS

Classis ___ Name of nominee ___
Address and Telephone number of nominee

Proposed for (please check one):
a. ___ Back-to-God Hour
b. ___ CRC Publications
c. ___ Christian Reformed World Relief
d. ___ Home Missions
e. ___ Pastoral Ministries
f. ___ World Missions

Church Information:
a. Member of ___ CRC
b. ___ Ordained ___ Non-ordained
c. Previous experience as:
___ Elder
___ Deacon
___ Other congregational ministries (describe below)

Sample

Classical or denominational experience:

Other experiences qualifying nominee as a board member:

Personal information
a. Age ___
b. Occupation ___
Other comments about why nominee would be a qualified board member:

In case of questions, please contact:
Name ___
Phone number ___

If this restructuring plan is approved by Synod 1999, the ministry councils could be operational in the fall of 2000—with initial meetings at the same time the first new Board of Trustees meeting occurs in the fall of 2000.

If this schedule is followed, the new structure could organize itself in the fiscal year 2000-2001.

IV. Existing agency boards

Existing agency boards should continue until the new structure of the Board of Trustees and ministry councils is operational. July 1 is the usual board-member transition date. In this special case agency boards/committees, as represented by their executive committees, would continue to serve until the fall of 2000, when the new Board of Trustees and ministry councils would begin.

During the fiscal year 2000-2001 these agency boards should transfer their duties to the Board of Trustees and to their respective new ministry councils. As noted above, one of the key steps in this transition would be a joint meeting of each outgoing agency board and its new ministry council in late 2000 or early 2001.

V. Ministries Administrative Team and related staff

If synod would approve the recommendations of this report in 1999, the executive director of ministries would assemble the members of the Ministries Administrative Team as defined in this report, who would begin immediately to shift their focus. The Ministries Coordinating Council should begin to function like the primary internal operating committee and change its name to the Ministries Administrative Team. It should be responsible for both the implementation of the integrated ministry plans approved by synod and for the day-to-day operation of the agencies. The general secretary would assist classes in their responsibilities regarding implementation of the new system.

VI. Test of regional ministry teams

The testing of two regional ministry teams is important and should commence at an early date in the United States to coincide with the Canadian pilot project already approved so that a binational evaluation is possible. The committee suggests that responsibility for the organization of the two U.S. pilot projects, as described earlier in this report in the section on regional ministry teams, be assigned to the executive director of ministries. Working with the Ministries Administrative Team, the executive director of ministries should be able to organize and implement this effort on a timetable which coordinates the three-year test with the denomination's overall reorganization effort. The committee suggests having the regional ministry teams effectively in place between July 1 and December 31, 2000. Such a schedule would fit with the timetable for establishing classical ministries committees, the new Board of Trustees, and agency ministry councils.

For ease of understanding, the suggested implementation schedule is outlined in the chart on the following page:

Chart 9: Suggested Implementation Schedule
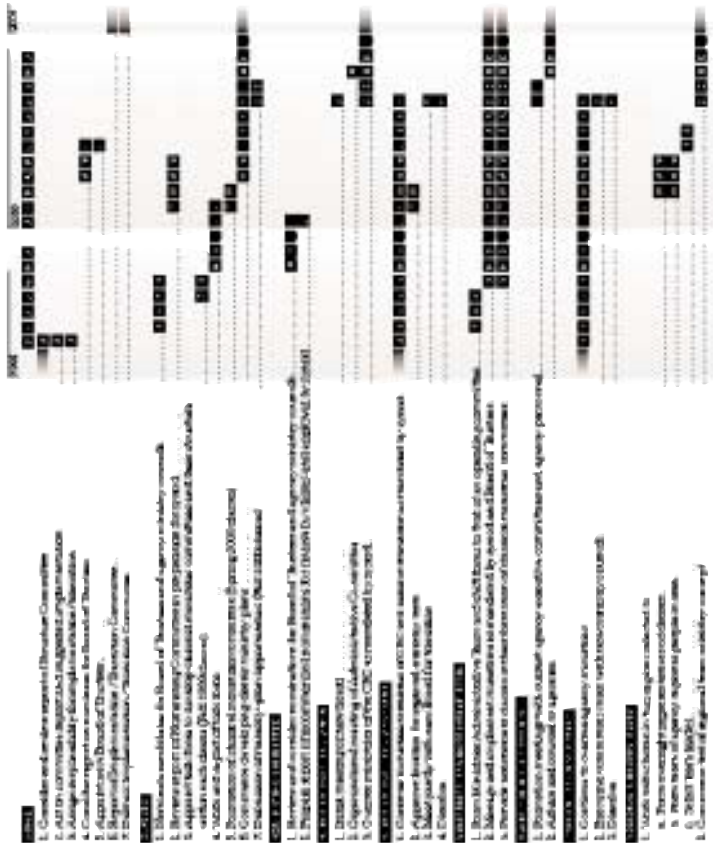
The overall schedule proposed will require timely decisions at each of the various steps to avoid delaying the entire schedule. Although some may view the schedule as aggressive, the committee believes that it is practicable and that the period of organizational change can and should be minimized. The longer the transition, the greater the opportunity for problems, misunderstandings, and disrupted governance of and communication about ministry. If Synod 1999 endorses the recommended changes, implementation should occur on a timely basis.

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OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Overture 1: Appoint a Study Committee to Examine Abortion- and Pregnancy-Related Issues

Classis Central California overtures synod to appoint a study committee to examine the following abortion- and pregnancy-related issues in the light of Scripture and to provide pastoral advice for the churches:

A. The teachings that differentiate between a person and a potential person in the pre-born state.

B. The teachings that recommend abortion in the case of rape in some young persons.

C. What to do in cases of known fetal deformity.

D. Whether Christians may use drugs such as Ru486 as a form of birth control.

E. When and how in-vitro fertilization may be used by couples having difficulty conceiving.

F. The harvesting of brain tissue and other tissue from fetuses.

G. Partial-birth abortion.

H. The morning-after pill and the IUD as methods of birth control.

I. The cloning of organs and the attempted cloning of persons.

J. Surrogacy.

K. Artificial insemination by donor (AID) for singles and for couples.

Grounds:
1. We strongly appreciate the 1972 report on abortion. As judged by synod's continued reference to this report since 1972, this report has served the churches well with respect to the abortion issue for the last twenty-five years. However, much has changed since synod adopted the 1972 report, and many new issues related to pregnancy and abortion have arisen (e.g., the issues listed in this overture).
2. The church is in need of pastoral advice in these other areas because many of our members do wrestle with these issues.
3. These issues are too big for any one church or classis to wrestle with by itself.
4. The expertise and advice of the larger church on these issues would be beneficial.

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Classis Central California
Harold Hiemstra, stated clerk
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Overture 2: Appoint a Commission to Consider Ethical and Theological Issues

Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures synod to authorize the appointment and funding of a commission to consider ethical and theological issues raised by increasing capabilities and recent discoveries in bioscience and genetic engineering. The three-year (or more, if necessary) commission, composed of scientists, theologians, and personnel in other appropriate disciplines, will study the issues, promote dialogue in the denomination, and produce a final report at the end of its term.

Grounds:
1. Unlike questions such as evolution and the age of the earth, which deal with creation's history and thus might be ignored or evaded by some, these new capabilities are here today and increasing rapidly. They will demand integration with how we think about God and his creatures and will require a moral response. Whether or not we choose to think about them, advances in these fields will radically affect the world in which we live and the choices we have to make.
2. Historically the church has struggled when confronted by areas of science and technology which have implications for what it believes and how it behaves.
3. Through such a commission the Christian Reformed Church can benefit from and possibly cooperate with the work being done by a similar agency in the Church of Scotland.

> Classis Atlantic Northeast
> J. George Aupperlee, stated clerk

Overture 3: Take Several Actions Regarding the Role of Women in the Churches

I. Background

Over two decades ago synod urged "the churches to make all possible use, within biblical guidelines and the restrictions of the Church Order, of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78). But subsequent synods have had a very difficult time translating those words into reality. That was painfully evident again when Synod 1998 appointed a committee to help Synod 2000 review the effects of the 1995 women-in-office decision (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 405).

One of the members of the synodical advisory committee responsible for recommending to synod the membership of the 2000 committee asked a woman from Classis Lake Erie who regularly attends synod to pray for it whether she would be willing to serve on the 2000 committee. After receiving a job description, she consented. Later the advisory committee, in consultation with the synodical officers and the denominational general secretary, decided that only men would serve on this committee and submitted an eight-member all-male committee to synod for approval. When the woman from Classis Lake Erie heard that, she wrote a note to the chairman of the advisory committee asking if that was true and, if so, why. Her questions, along with another

concern he had, caused the advisory-committee chairman to inform the synodical officers that his committee needed to reconvene to discuss the membership of the 2000 committee. Later the 2000 committee was expanded to nine persons, one of whom is a woman (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 444).

This action expressly contradicts a series of synodical decisions about the composition of synodical committees. Synod 1975 encouraged the church "to make all possible use, within biblical guidelines and the restrictions of the Church Order, of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church." Synod 1995 expanded this mandate and made it explicit, saying, "That synod encourage boards, agencies, and *itself and future synods* [emphasis in the original] to include in their committees persons who reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of our denomination and, where applicable, the range of opinion that exists in our denomination on a particular matter to be studied" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656). The ground given for this decision was that, "while such diversity has been encouraged previously, synod has not always listened to itself on this matter . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656). Despite this decision and ground, Synod 1995 appointed a seven-member all-male committee and thereby sent a strong signal to the denomination that, in terms of women's gifts, the words of synod would not affect its practice.

In 1996 Classis Lake Erie called attention to this contradiction between the words of synod and its actions and called upon synod to honor its past decisions to use "the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church." Again, synod responded with words affirming that it would take action to ensure that "committees appointed to do the work of the denomination reflect its rich diversity" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 555). Yet, only two years later, an advisory committee in consultation with the officers of synod and the denominational general secretary proposed a committee on which there were no women. Women were given token representation on the committee only after a woman who was not a synodical delegate called this plainly unfair situation to the attention of the chair of the advisory committee. Once again, the words of synod did not affect its practice.

It is inexcusable that a synodical advisory committee in consultation with the synodical officers and the denominational general secretary decided that women would be excluded from the 2000 committee. It is inexcusable that a woman from Classis Lake Erie, not the leadership of synod, had to remind synod to act in accordance with its past decisions. It is inexcusable that there is only one woman on this nine-member committee.

We are grieved that the action of Synod 1998 makes it necessary for us to bring this matter to the attention of synod once more. We ask synod to honor its own words. We ask synod to do what is only just and right: to invite women to participate in a process that so deeply affects them. We have heard the words of our synodical assemblies, but we have not seen justice rolling on like a river of righteousness flowing in a never-failing stream. May the day soon come when the women of our denomination are treated with full equality and respect.

II. Overture
Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to

A. Add at least two more women to the 2000 committee.

B. Reaffirm the 1975, 1995, and 1996 synodical decisions regarding the use of women's gifts. (1975: the churches are encouraged "to make all possible use, within biblical guidelines and the restrictions of the Church Order, of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church." 1995: "boards, agencies, and . . . synods [are] to include in their committees persons who reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of our denomination and, where applicable, the range of opinion that exists in our denomination on a particular matter to be studied. 1996: "committees appointed to do the work of the denomination [are to] reflect its rich diversity.")

C. Instruct the denominational general secretary to distribute the 1975, 1995, and 1996 synodical decisions regarding the use of women's gifts to all synodical advisory committees and to orally remind any advisory committee of these decisions before it recommends a committee to the entire synod.

Grounds:
1. These actions will demonstrate that synod is indeed serious about using the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church.
2. These actions will demonstrate that synod itself has a healthy respect for synodical decisions.

Classis Lake Erie
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 4: Develop a Policy re Short- and Long-Term Disability for Ministers of the Word

I. Background: Facts pertaining to the disability of Rev. Norman Prenger, Christ Community CRC, Victoria, BC

– In July of 1997 Rev. Norman Prenger, pastor of Christ Community Christian Reformed Church, suffered a heart attack and after bypass surgery was disabled by a stroke.
– Christian Reformed pastors do not have short-term disability insurance or any guidelines or policies regarding short-term disability. The Church Order provides no guidance as to what constitutes honorable provision for disabled pastors.
– Christ Community Church does not have a written short- or long-term disability policy (we suspect many other churches also do not have such policies).
– Unemployment insurance was inadequate in this case to provide for the needs involved. Christ Community was advised by Canada Employment that any provision made to our pastor by our church would result in an equal reduction in his unemployment insurance.
– Christ Community Church council decided to maintain the pastor's salary until the outcome for disability benefits became known and proposed to the congregation to maintain support until the end of 1998.
– The principle of honorable support was never in question, but the manner in which support should be provided became extremely difficult to determine.

- The application for long-term disability through the CRC Ministers' Pension Funds proved to be a difficult undertaking. Material regarding the process, provided to our pastor by the office of Pensions and Insurance, was inadequate. The church council had at its disposal even less information than the pastor did. The role council should and could play was impossible to determine. The denominational personnel responsible for the administration of the Ministers' Pension Funds were unfamiliar with the rules and regulations governing the disability policy in Canada. They had no knowledge of the Canada Pension Plan, a benefit upon which the disability pension for CRC pastors partly depends.
- Application for a disability pension in the CRC requires that a pastor be retired by classis. This procedure can have tremendous emotional impact on a pastor. The long-term prognosis for Rev. Prenger was unclear, and the application for retirement merely encouraged despair rather than hope.
- The present policy does not seem to provide for the possibility of a gradual resumption of pastoral duties. In fact, attempts to return to the ministry could jeopardize the pension altogether and might even disqualify a pastor from resuming the pension if he or she finds him- or herself unable to carry out the required duties. This situation adds stress for the pastor and complicates temporary staffing arrangements for the church.
- Experience, expertise, and advice on how to deal with our situation was lacking within our classis, as we suspect it would be in most classes.
- Eight months elapsed from the time of disability to the time the disability pension was approved. The outcome of the application was never certain, and so the extent and length of support required by the congregation for its disabled pastor was also unknown. The stress this produced for the pastor and his family was great.
- Christ Community Church's financial resources were such that the financial support that it gave to its current pastor left it unable to hire interim staffing. It was not until the actual delivery of benefits from the Ministers' Pension Funds that the church was able to begin a search for interim staffing.
- Christ Community Church brought these concerns to classis in March 1998 and was advised to submit an overture to synod dealing with the problem of disability claims prior to retirement.
- Classis British Columbia North-West adopted the overture of Christ Community Church as its own at the classis meeting of September 16, 1998.

II. Overture
Classis British Columbia North-West overtures synod to

A. Create written guidelines and procedures for church councils to follow in the event that a pastor becomes disabled.

B. Include in the aforementioned written guidelines and procedures the following specifics:

1. How to honorably provide for a disabled pastor (for both the short and long term and in both Canada and the U.S.).

2. The role councils should play in expediting benefit applications.

3. How to obtain temporary staff and how to formulate contracts that provide for the possible return of the disabled pastor.

C. Investigate and make recommendations regarding the options available for short- and long-term disability insurance for all CRC pastors.

D. Eliminate the need for disabled pastors to retire in order to apply for disability benefits. A pastor should not be required to retire until he or she has come to a clear understanding and acceptance of the situation or until the lapse of a reasonable waiting period (i.e., one to two years).

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Classis B.C. North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

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Overture 5: Mandate the Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries to Evaluate Syncretistic Practices Employed by Native Ministries

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to mandate the Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries to evaluate the allegedly syncretistic practices (namely, sweat lodges, smudge, peace pipe, and/or other native peoples' traditional and cultural elements with religious overtones, symbolism, or significance) presently employed by the three Canadian Native Ministries and render its decision to Synod 2000.

Grounds:
A. The director of the Edmonton Native Healing Centre has acknowledged in his reports to Classis Alberta North and in the *Christian Courier* (18 Sept. 1998) that such practices are being carried out. The fall 1995 report to classis from the executive secretary of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) indicated that these ceremonies were being practiced by all three Canadian Native Ministries.
B. There is sufficient concern among the churches with regard to these practices to warrant an investigation of the compatibility of these practices with the Christian faith.
C. The Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries, which was established in 1996 in response to Classis Alberta North's overture (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, Overture 64, p. 312; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 554), was not specifically mandated to evaluate these practices and help synod render a decision concerning the use of them in CRC ministry to native peoples in Canada.
D. Repeated questions about the issue of syncretism in the Canadian Native Ministries have been raised at local, CCRCC, denominational, and national committee levels, but they have never been addressed or satisfactorily answered (see the concerns raised by Rev. Henry De Rooy in the Christian Reformed Home Missions "MAP" dated January 30, 1989, and the concerns Rocky Mountain House CRC raised with the Edmonton Native Healing Centre on the floor of Classis Alberta North, to the CCRCC, to the Canadian Native Ministries Board, and to the Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries).

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Classis Alberta North
William H. Vanden Born, stated clerk

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Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod

A. Not to adopt Recommendation D (the establishment of a nonordained denominationally recognized position called associate in educational ministry) and the related Church Order Supplement changes in Recommendation G in the report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry."

Grounds:
1. The proposal offers no assistance to a congregation regarding the hiring of an educational-ministry staff person.
2. The "recognition" offered by this proposal does not enable the "certified" associate to perform any functions he or she was not already performing and does not translate into any improvement in compensation or benefits that a congregation could not determine to grant on its own.
3. The proposal unnecessarily (and without precedent) involves the classis in evaluation of unordained staff persons at the congregational level.
4. The proposal will likely entail considerable expense for classis and denominational certification, record keeping, and monitoring for those who would hold this "denominationally recognized position."

B. Not to adopt Recommendation E (the establishment of a new, fifth ecclesiastical office, the minister of education), the related Church Order amendments in Recommendation F, and related Church Order Supplement changes in Recommendation G in the report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry."

Grounds:
1. The task assigned to this new office is already covered in the Church Order section on the calling and varieties of service of the minister of the Word (Church Order Arts. 11 and 12). History and current CRC practice have allowed individual ministers of the Word to concentrate their efforts mainly or exclusively on educational and youth ministry in obeying their calling "to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ." "All ministers share a common task, and each shall discharge it in accordance with his particular calling."
2. By denying to holders of this proposed new office the privilege of administering the sacraments, Recommendation E sets one facet (preaching) of the ministry of the Word above all the others, failing to recognize the unique and valuable insights that each facet of Word-ministry brings to an understanding of the sacraments.
3. The report and recommendation do not address adequately the legal issues related to "ministerial" status (under the codes of Canada and the United States) of those who would be ordained to this new office.

C. To direct the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to examine whether a broadening (from its current emphasis on the preaching component

of Word-ministry) of ministry-concentration options within the M.Div. degree program (1) would better fit the CRC Church Order and the descriptions of the ministry of the Word given in the forms for ordination and (2) would better meet the CRC's future needs for a broad range of specialization in ordained Word-ministry.

Ground: Such a broadening would enable Calvin Theological Seminary to better coordinate its training with the ministry needs of the churches. It may also restrain the tendency to elevate some facets of Word-ministry over others and may prevent the unnecessary proliferation of specialized ministry offices within the Church Order.

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Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip Lucasse, stated clerk

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Overture 7: Not to Create a Fifth Office of Minister of Education

I. Background

Classis Eastern Canada believes that the synodical report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry" correctly cites valid needs within the denomination that need to be addressed. These needs, however, can be addressed in ways other than the creation of more denominational hierarchy (i.e., another office and an additional unordained position). That these needs can be met in other ways is demonstrated by the fact that the synodical committee itself recommends a way to meet the need of Classis Red Mesa without adding a special office.

Aside from the needs of Classis Red Mesa, the issue that remains is how the church will meet the challenges of providing effective relational ministry to youth and effective educational ministry to adults. That these challenges exist is adequately demonstrated by the number of churches employing persons in these areas of ministry.

Since churches are increasingly turning to the training and employment of persons for specialized ministries, it would indeed be helpful for the denomination to have an agreed-upon approach to recognizing and empowering such persons for ministry within our churches. Creating another office with certain official acts inherent in it as well as an additional unordained position with its own particular functions simply adds extra and unnecessary layers of structure.

As a classis we acknowledge

– That the church is given the authority under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to create offices that are helpful for it to carry on its mission in the world.
– That specialized ministries may be focused distinctly and sufficiently enough to be distinguished in their work from the general scope of work required of most elders and pastors.
– That specialized ministries may require specialized training which is different from that traditionally provided to ministers of the Word.
– That there are sufficient numbers of persons engaged by churches in the CRC to warrant specialized ministries such as youth ministry or educational ministry.

– That such persons may be aided in providing effective ministry through some form of ordination.

We submit that ordination, recognition of such distinct ministries, and permission to engage in certain "official acts of ministry" can be provided without the creation of an additional office that has certain official acts of ministry inherent in it. Such equipping for effective ministry could be attained within our present structures with only minor modifications, such as the following:

– First, the churches could ordain such persons into the office of elder, acknowledging that their area of ministry falls within the calling and mandate extended to elders as given in the form for ordination.
– Second, the churches could recognize these persons with a special title, as has been done in Canadian churches by designating certain elders as youth elders. The title granted could be specific to the situation. Specific terms of reference for these specialized elderships could be set by local consistories, as they have been for youth elders and administrative elders.
– Third, the churches could recognize and take note of existing avenues to allow such persons to exhort, should that be helpful to their ministry (cf. Church Order Art. 53). Sermons could be submitted beforehand to the consistory for approval, or such persons could seek license to exhort from classis.
– Fourth, Church Order Article 53 could be changed from "They shall, however, refrain from all official acts of ministry" to "They shall engage only in those official acts of ministry which council has deemed helpful for their ministry or necessary for the well-being of the church in the absence of a minister of the Word."

These changes would grant councils the right to determine who, in addition to ordained ministers, may perform official acts of ministry as well as which official acts they may perform. This solution would certainly be more flexible in application than two new, defined, and limited offices would be.

II. Overture
Classis Eastern Canada overtures synod not to accede to the recommendation to create a fifth office as brought forward by the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry."

Grounds:
A. It is possible to recognize and empower persons serving within specialized ministries by making only minor adjustments to the Church Order's terms of reference regarding present offices.
B. Anyone serving in specialized areas such as youth ministry or adult education could be ordained as an elder to carry out a specialized task. This practice would be similar to the present practice of ministers entering into specialized ministries yet retaining their office as minister of the Word, or elders being ordained as youth elders or administrative elders.
C. Church Order Article 53 could be modified to allow councils freedom to grant permission to qualified persons to perform official acts of ministry as times and circumstances require.

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Classis Eastern Canada
James Kooistra, stated clerk
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Overture 8: Not to Adopt Recommendations of the Report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry"

I. Introduction

Classis Lake Erie believes that synod should not adopt the recommendations of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry." We believe that the report itself and the recommendations fail to give clear theological direction for our continuing denominational discussion on leadership, that they make unwarranted distinctions between clergy and laity, that they set up a burdensome and unnecessary system of classical examinations, and that they fail to address adequately the issues encountered in actual ministry. In what follows we will discuss these claims and make proposals that we believe would better address the questions faced by the committee.

II. Theological analysis

After an introductory discussion of its mandate, the committee divides its work into four parts: a discussion of ordination, a definition of the "official acts of ministry," a response to the particular needs of Classis Red Mesa, and a discussion of the possible ordination of persons in specialized ministries.

The first of these tasks involves a discussion of Report 44 to Synod 1973 and the decisions made by that synod in response to the report (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 61-64). The authors of the present study clearly believe that Report 44 failed to address adequately the question of authority in church office. They portray Report 44 as having a "tone of anti-authoritarianism, anticlericalism, and anti-officiousness," of being a product of its time. They argue, against Report 44 or at least against their reading of Report 44, for what might be called the "formal authority" of office (they call it the "objective character" of office)—the authority that resides in the office rather than in the person. On this specific point we would agree. Certainly church office does possess such authority, and it may be that Report 44 does not adequately address such authority. We would also agree with the committee that discussion about the nature of ordination and the authority that pertains to ordination should continue. However, we do not believe that the committee has laid out the discussion in a way that will help to foster that discussion.

In the midst of its review and critique of Report 44, the committee report, which is mostly a discussion of the relationship of office and authority, takes a rather sudden turn by introducing the idea that "officebearers" are the "representatives of Christ." The committee claims that this idea is referred "approvingly to" by Report 44. What the committee fails to say is that Report 44 cites this idea only to caution us that it is often carelessly applied. Report 44 does mention the fact that Reformed theologians have often held, over against some other parts of Christianity, that "office-bearers are not representatives of the church but of Christ" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 690), but then it goes on immediately to say the following:

> This concept of the authority of the office-bearers comes to focus on the official character of preaching. Many theologians comment on authority of preaching by an ordained minister in an organized congregation. . . .
>
> A sharp distinction is . . . made between the preaching done by an ordained minister and the exhorting done by anyone else. . . .
>
> *Again, the question may be raised whether too strong a case has been made for a*

possibly legitimate distinction. Is the argument weightier than its biblical support? It may be quite proper and defensible that the church open its pulpits only to properly qualified and duly designated men. But it would be very difficult to demonstrate on the basis of the texts . . . that it is ordained men alone to whom these texts apply, and that it is ordained men alone whose words of witness are a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

The instances cited above reflect a slight but dangerous tendency to blur the lines on several important points. *There is a tendency to lend scriptural authority to practical decisions and time-hallowed traditions.*

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 690-91, italics added)

The present committee seems to do precisely what Report 44 here warns us about—taking the idea that officebearers represent Christ to the congregation and then concluding from this idea that only officebearers may perform certain liturgical acts. This conclusion does not follow. The fact that a minister represents Christ in preaching the sermon does not mean that others recognized by the congregation cannot also do so. Nor does it take account of the pattern of leadership in Scripture, where, as Report 44 amply demonstrates, giftedness seems itself to be taken as evidence of the Lord's call.

In general, the discussion of church leadership in the committee's report is difficult to follow and seems ill suited to help the denomination think through the many issues related to church leadership now before the church.

III. Acts of ministry

The reason the argument about representing Christ is so important to the committee becomes evident in the next section of its report, where it argues that in matters of the Word only ordained ministers "represent Christ." Citing Van Dellen and Monsma (*Revised Church Order Commentary*), they restrict certain official acts—administration of the sacraments, preaching of the Word, and pronouncement of the greeting and benediction—to ordained clergy, because only clergy properly represent Christ in these actions to the congregation. On the other hand, elders can represent Christ while installing officebearers, receiving members, and excommunicating persons under discipline.

Where does this come from? What Scripture authorizes these distinctions? The argument seems to depend on the idea that, since we call ministers "ministers of the Word," any "word-related" liturgical events must be restricted to ministers. But what if we called them "pastors," a more biblical word and one much favored in our congregations? What "official acts of ministry" belong to pastors? Caring for the flock? Comforting the sick? Exhorting? Leading? Warning? What acts belong to the minister as shepherd, pastor? Surely all these things and more. But they do not belong to the pastor alone. They belong to the church. And if the pastor is set aside by ordination to take special responsibility for these tasks, does that mean that others should not come alongside him or her and help carry the load?

And this is just the point, one made strongly by Report 44. Each office has its own character, but that fact does not mean that it has exclusive responsibility in a given area. In Acts 6, the apostles divide the work of the leadership of the community for the first time. The apostles will pray and preach; the seven will "wait on tables." But this division does not exclude Stephen from preaching or Philip from baptizing, and we may well imagine that the apostles occasionally waited on tables. Pastors are trained and called and set aside to bring the Word and conduct worship, among other things, but does that mean

that others should not or cannot preach or pray for the people or administer sacraments or give the people a blessing?

The Word and the sacraments belong to the whole church, not to the offices. This is the heart of the Protestant view of office, and it follows from the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The authority of Christ is manifest in the church as a whole organism—with its leadership and offices and procedures—not in the office apart from the church. Within this organism, some, for good order, are authorized to assume certain responsibilities and perform certain acts of ministry, but these acts of ministry—proclamation of God's Word, serving at the Lord's table, blessing each other, and greeting each other in the name of the Lord—have been granted to us—together—by our Lord. Nowhere in the New Testament are any of these acts restricted to certain offices. There is no office apart from the church.

So why would we begin at this late date to define the acts of ministry and risk the very clericalism the Reformation attacked? Are we not in danger of confusing office with good order? It may be good order normally to have properly trained persons conduct certain parts of the worship services, but this distinction does not inhere in office. The New Testament (see Acts 6) seems to define office by the central responsibilities given to the officeholder, not by drawing boundaries around the office. Office seems to be defined by relationship and responsibility. What are the central responsibilities of pastors, elders, deacons, and evangelists? How do we define their relationships to Christ, to each other, to the congregation? Answer these questions and you have defined the offices.

The approach taken by the committee draws boundaries around the offices. This office may do thus and so; that office, other things. We hope that the synod will see that the course taken by the committee ends in arbitrariness. Ministers may do this; elders may do that. Deacons may do a third thing. We will be forever drawing lines, lines with no scriptural warrant, lines which make little sense in the real world of ministry.

IV. Classis Red Mesa and a fifth office

Once the committee has started down the path of defining the "official acts of ministry," it is led toward the conclusion of proliferating offices—an office for every ministry. The proposal here is for a new office: minister of education. But what about ministers of music? Ministers of pastoral care? Ministers of campus life? Or are these to be subsumed under minister of education? Are they to be subject to the same educational requirements as the committee specifies for ministers of education? In the fast-moving world of church staffing, there is no way that the denomination will be able to keep up.

Nor does it need to. There is a better solution already at hand. Synod 1995 altered Church Order Article 23 to permit evangelists to serve in organized congregations along with ministers of the Word (the change was proposed by Synod 1994 in response to an overture from Classis Lake Erie and approved by Synod 1995). The key to this arrangement was not restricting evangelists from doing certain acts of ministry. Quite the contrary. Overture 9 of 1994 cited Synod 1978, which spoke of "the inconsistency of the practice prevailing in the church which divorces administration of the sacraments from that of the Word" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 535), and Synod 1976, which spoke against "separating office from work" (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 536). The key to the new

arrangement, which permits evangelists to serve in organized congregations, is the presence of a minister of the Word. This, according to one of the grounds adopted by Synod 1994 in its decision, "safeguards our historic insistence that the primary pastor in an organized congregation be well-trained theologically (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 489). It allows great flexibility while maintaining good order and ensuring that all acts of ministry are under the supervision of properly trained clergy. The arrangement also respects how staff ministries actually work. To set up an office of minister of education entirely separate from the authority of the pastor is not wise.

What may be required is a recognition that the office of evangelist may be used more broadly than the title alone would indicate. The title *evangelist* would seem to restrict the office to persons doing evangelism, but it need not do so. All of the work of the church is evangelistic—proclamation of the Good News. Ministers of education as well as ministers of outreach are called to be evangelists. The specific duties of the office can be locally defined, provided that they are such duties as fit and require the recognition of church office. The training for such positions must also be tailored to the situation. With this flexibility built into the office of evangelist, churches would be able to meet their leadership needs without creating a host of new offices.

Some attention should also be given to how candidates for this office are trained and examined. In many cases, sending a person to Calvin Theological Seminary or a similar institution for an extended period of time is not practical. What is required if the Christian Reformed Church is to meet its leadership needs for the next era of history is a strong system of localized and on-site training, including formalized mentorships, correspondence courses, regional seminars conducted by seminary professors, and other methods of bringing training to the workers rather than the workers to the training. The model proposed by the committee, which requires seminary training, will not meet the long-range needs of a growing denomination. Growth requires new leadership. The leadership is already there, in the congregations. The question is how we can best equip and deploy that leadership for ministry in the churches.

Secondly, we must devise methods not only to examine but also to supervise the life and training of staff members. The suggestion of the committee that ministers of education be examined by classis in the presence of synodical deputies, however, only creates an enormous amount of extra work for the classes. Evangelist examinations do not require the presence of synodical deputies. Synod should also give classes some flexibility in administering the examinations, allowing for alternatives to examinations in plenary session of classis but providing for a thorough review of the candidate's training and suitability for ministry, as well as ongoing supervision of those who hold office in our denomination.

Finally, the Red Mesa special need is not really a unique need but rather an instance of a broad-based need for flexibility in church leadership. In many other places within the CRC, including suburban congregations, there are needs for developing indigenous leadership and empowering that leadership to take responsibility for acts of ministry that were once considered the province of the clergy. Rather than treating Red Mesa as an exception, synod should see Red Mesa as an opportunity to develop new models of leadership. According to the principle of not separating Word from sacrament (see above), those who are entrusted with bringing the Word of God to small congregations

should be also be entrusted to supervise the table of the Lord. And according to the principle of not separating office from work, those who bring the Word and sacraments should be recognized for what they are—ordained evangelists, persons who are set aside for the service of the Lord. There are great opportunities in these situations to bring about growth, if we find ways to support and strengthen the leadership already present in the congregations.

V. Overture
Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. Not to adopt Recommendations B, C, D, E, F, and G of the study committee.

B. To declare the following statements of principle:

1. That all authority in the church as well as elsewhere belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. That the authority of our Lord is mediated to us by the Spirit through the Word and the sacramental community.

3. That within the community of Christ, the Lord calls and gives authority to leaders. Such leaders are recognized by the approval of the community itself, their responsiveness to the Word, and their faithfulness to the Master.

4. That the character of leadership in the church is the character of Christ himself. All leadership in the church includes the following:

   a. Authority within the realm to which Christ has called and the church has appointed the leader. This is the kingship responsibility of leadership.
   b. Pastoral responsibility modeled after the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep. This is the priestly responsibility of leadership.
   c. Prophetic responsibility, which is speaking the truth of God in love to others.

5. That the specific form of such leadership varies with time and circumstance.

6. That the Christian Reformed Church needs to address several new situations requiring a new approach to leadership. Among these are

   a. Ministry areas like Classis Red Mesa where there are small congregations which cannot afford to have full-time ordained ministers and where there are gifted persons who need the proper recognition from the denomination to be able to carry on the work to which they have been called.

   b. Churches with staff ministries, where the work is delegated among staff persons who need proper recognition from the congregation and denomination to be able to carry on the work to which they have been called.

7. That the basic structure of the present office of evangelist meets the requirements of these situations, allowing persons with specialized and/or nontraditional education to serve within a structure of authority that preserves the legitimate denominational interest in good order and proper preparation.

C. To declare that the office of evangelist is appropriate for those persons in our congregations whose work entails such duties and responsibilities as require the rights, recognition, and authority of office. Such persons shall meet the requirements currently listed in Church Order Supplement, Article 23-b. The classes shall see to the proper supervision of the life and work of evangelists.

D. To mandate Calvin Theological Seminary to develop programs for training evangelists at or near the sites of the ministries to which they have been called.

Grounds:
1. The recommendations of the committee set up an unbiblical distinction between laity and clergy, fostering a new form of clericalism.
2. The definition of "official acts of ministry" proposed by the committee is arbitrary and not based on Scripture.
3. Proliferation of offices does not solve the need for leadership in the denomination but creates a burdensome system of requirements and examinations.
4. The proposed new office of minister of education does not recognize the structure of authority within congregations and staff ministries.

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Classis Lake Erie
    George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

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Overture 9: Not to Establish a Fifth Ordained Office

Classis Lake Superior overtures synod not to establish a fifth ordained office—minister of education—in the Christian Reformed Church as recommended by the report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry."

Grounds:
1. Such an office would separate the presentation of the Word of God from the administration of the sacraments in the person holding this proposed new office. We understand and accept the committee's argument that the presentation of the Word of God in exhortation and preaching falls under the supervision of the local council. And we readily agree that during seminary training and in order to meet certain local needs of churches and classes, persons should be officially licensed to exhort in the churches. Our own classis has greatly benefited from the services of a growing number of persons licensed to exhort. We are grateful to the Lord and the broader church for those services.

   Nevertheless, church office is more than task and function. It is a complex calling that mysteriously and graciously combines function and task with the person performing the tasks and living the vocation. We recognize that a minister of education could function as a licensed exhorter in a local church where she or he works full-time. However, to separate presentation of the Word of God from other "official acts of ministry" strikes us as unwise because it divides the unitary office and calling of an ordained minister in the church of Christ.

Furthermore, many congregations long ago established unordained positions such as minister of music, youth minister, and, indeed, minister of education to suit local needs. These are important, perhaps even indispensable, roles in today's complex society and ecclesiastical organization. Except in instances where congregations have decided that, for example, a youth pastor should be ordained in order to share in preaching and administering the sacraments, these positions or functions have not been considered to fit the category of ordained ministry.

We have no problem with the fact that such tasks are being done by persons given such titles. Nor are we in any way proposing ministerial elitism. Rather, we are advocating that what has been united in terms of office (calling, function, and person) not be separated in our denomination.

2. This proposed fifth office does not appear to address adequately the needs of Classis Red Mesa that were included in the mandate of the study committee.

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Classis Lake Superior
Anthony Schweitzer, stated clerk
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Overture 10: Withhold Action on the Report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry"

Classis Alberta North overtures synod

A. To withhold action on the report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry" until Synod 2001.

B. To instruct the committee to complete its original mandate "to consider the matters of ordination and 'official acts of ministry' (Church Order Art. 53-b) as these apply to youth pastors and persons in other specialized ministries who attain their positions by pathways other than the M.Div. degree."

C. To consider how training from institutions other than Calvin Theological Seminary will be regarded with respect to the criteria for ordination.

Grounds:
1. The report itself mentions the committee's uncertainty about having fulfilled its mandate.
2. Rather than open the door for a proliferation of offices, the church would be better served by a single structure that has been well thought through.
3. As specialized ministries in the church are increasing in number, people are coming into these ministries by more ways than just the traditional M.Div. route. For many, ministry is a second and/or a part-time career, and for them following the traditional route into ministry is difficult. The issue of how training other than that received at Calvin Theological Seminary can meet the criteria for ordination needs to be addressed.
4. This delay will give the churches time to consider the issues connected with ordination as it relates to persons in specialized ministries.

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Classis Alberta North
William H. Vanden Born, stated clerk
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I. Introduction

A. The council of Palos Heights CRC, Palos Heights, Illinois, believes that synod should not adopt the recommendations of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry." We believe that the report fails to provide clear biblical, theological, and confessional justification for its proposed fifth ordained office.

B. The committee divides its work into four parts: a discussion of ordination, a definition of "official acts of ministry," a response to the particular needs of Classis Red Mesa, and a discussion of a proposed fifth office. In what follows, we survey the four parts of the committee's work and highlight some areas of concern.

II. Ordination and office

A. One mandate of the committee was to consider how the 1973 synodical actions on office and ordination apply to "persons engaged in youth ministry and in other specialized ministries." This mandate led to a study of the practice of ordination and the existence of offices in the church. Consequently, the committee made several conclusions that are essential to its recommendations:

1. Ecclesiastical office is established by Christ.
2. When a person is ordained as an officebearer, he/she experiences an "objective change in status."
3. The "objective change in status" enables ordained individuals "to exercise the authority of an office and to carry out its duties."

B. Critique

1. The report does not explain the nature of the change of status that accompanies ordination.

2. The report does not explain the relation of the ordained office to the threefold office of the believer (Lord's Day 12).

3. The report does not explain the relation between ordination, commissioning, and appointment; does not explain which act is appropriate for which work or activity; does not explain how commissioning or appointment is insufficient for the work envisioned for the fifth office, particularly if the commissioning or appointment involves ordination to one of the existing four offices of the church.

III. "Official acts of ministry"

A. Even though Church Order Article 53-b speaks of "official acts of ministry," the Church Order has yet to define and list those acts. The committee, therefore, sets out to fill that gap. Based on common consent and traditional

practice, the committee states that the "official acts" of the ministry of the Word are the following:

1. The official proclamation of the Word.
2. The administration of the sacraments.
3. The pronouncement of the greeting and benediction in the worship service.
4. The installation of officebearers.
5. The reception of persons into full membership of the church and the excommunication of persons from the fellowship of the church.

B. Critique

1. The category "official acts of ministry" is only briefly explored in connection with the ministry of the Word, and even then, the report does not provide biblical, theological, and confessional support for the assumptions supporting the category.

2. This list of "official acts of ministry" appears to rise from a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, approach—"What acts do ministers do that impress us as official?" Such an approach fails to provide biblical, theological, and confessional justification for its official list. The list is only an imprimatur upon what appears to have been established as a pattern. Consequently, the report does not provide principled guidance for the church.

IV. Request of Classis Red Mesa

A. The committee wrestled with the request of Classis Red Mesa to allow someone other than a minister of the Word to administer the sacraments. One ground for the request was a guideline adopted by Synod 1973 which states that "there are no valid biblical or doctrinal reasons why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also administer the sacraments."

B. The committee concludes that, while ministers of the Word may administer both means of grace, such should not be the case for others in the church. The report states that elders may administer the Lord's Supper; evangelists and those licensed to exhort may preach the Word.

C. Questions raised but not answered by the report

1. The report does not state why elders may administer the Lord's Supper but not baptism.

2. The report does not explain how a person licensed to exhort or an ordained elder differs from a minister of the Word or why a congregation ought, normally, to employ an ordained minister of the Word.

V. The fifth office: Minister of education

A. On the foundation of its previous arguments, the report proposes that the CRC establish a fifth office in the church for youth pastors and church educators, the office of minister of education.

1. The committee correctly states that, in order to adopt another office, we must first distinguish a significant difference between the proposed fifth

office and the current offices of the church. According to the committee, the primary functional difference between a minister of the Word and a minister of education is a list of activities developed by the committee. The minister of education, for example, may offer the salutation and benediction but may not preach the Word or administer the sacraments.

2. However, the report states that a minister of education shall be considered an elder in the church who, in some situations, may administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In addition, the report states that a minister of education with the gift of preaching may be licensed to exhort. Hence, in the end, some ministers of education will be allowed to function in a manner very similar to that of a minister of the Word.

B. Critique

1. The primary difference between a minister of the Word and the proposed minister of education is determined by lists of qualifications and activities determined by way of common consent and current practice. No biblical, confessional, or theological support is offered. Instead, the report provides references to past reports of synod and to an unpublished doctoral dissertation.

2. The arguments used to distinguish the fifth office from the other offices do not draw any lines against a proliferation of offices. The method of argument employed in the report could easily be applied to propose additional ministerial offices such as minister of pastoral care/counseling, minister of music, and minister of administration.

3. The similarities between the proposed fifth office and the office of the minister of the Word weaken the call for a distinct office.

4. The argument that ministers of education be granted the privilege of officiating at weddings is based upon the reality that staff members of a congregation often provide premarital counseling. The argument, however, is unconvincing for two reasons:

   a. First, many people, such as professional therapists, provide such premarital instruction without being credentialed to conduct weddings.

   b. Second, the argument is descriptive rather than prescriptive. Couldn't we also argue that, if a minister of education provides training for elders and deacons, he/she should have the privilege of ordaining and installing these officebearers?

5. The report does not provide basic information about the need for a fifth office. How many ministers of education would we ordain? How many congregations are asking for an ordained person for youth or educational ministry? If the number is significant, wouldn't it be prudent to review the status of the office of evangelist in terms of training, qualifications, and service? If the number is small, why has the committee brought this proposal before the church?

6. The report does not explain why candidates for the proposed fifth office should be allowed to complete an M.A. degree in youth/educational

ministry or an equivalent from any accredited college or seminary. Why didn't the committee insist that every candidate receive the designated degree from Calvin Theological Seminary?

7. The report weakens its argument by suggesting that the proposed minister of education be considered an elder in the church.

   a. The report fails to explain why, if a minister of education is ordained and installed by a congregation as an elder, we need a fifth office. Wouldn't ordination as elder provide "objective status" in the church?
   b. The report fails to justify its assertion that the church should consider a minister of education as an elder.

8. The proposal implicitly accepts the current but questionable trend of the professionalization of the ministry, a development that accentuates the differences between the ordained and nonordained and threatens our understanding of the priesthood of all believers.

9. The proposal supports, perhaps inadvertently, the disengagement of theology from the work of the ministry by prescribing a course of study for the minister of education that is primarily functional rather than theological. The proposal therefore supports the current trend in modern American Protestantism to devalue the place of theology in the ministry of the church.

VI. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Recommendations B, D, E, F, and G of the study committee.

Grounds:
A. The recommendations lack a solid biblical, theological, and confessional foundation.
B. The report does not establish a significant difference between the proposed fifth office and the current offices of the church.
C. The recommendations are inconsistent with the spirit of Report 44 to Synod 1973.
D. The proliferation of offices does not solve the need for servant ministry in the church but creates a paralyzing system of requirements and examinations.

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Council of Palos Heights CRC,
Palos Heights, IL
Bill Davids, clerk

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Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Chicago South but due to time constraints was withdrawn from the agenda without prejudice and without decision.

I. Background information

Classis Pella gives thanks for the many blessings that God has given through the ministries and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. According to the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S., "Our current denominational structures for ministry and governance have, in general, worked well in the past. They have allowed the CRC to build a wide range of denominational ministries" (Structure Committee report, *Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 311). "The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church reach millions of people in more than thirty countries around the world. The breadth of these ministries demonstrates the denomination's obedience to the Great Commission. The Christian Reformed Church has been blessed beyond measure with resources and people who are committed to being the 'salt of the earth'" (Web page of the CRCNA).

Classis Pella also gives thanks for cooperation among the agencies of the CRC. World Missions and CRWRC have increasingly collaborated in church planting, evangelism, and service/development ministry in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. World Missions, CRWRC, and The Back to God Hour have a cooperative ministry in Russia. CRWRC and Home Missions have cosponsored and collaborated in the Task Force on the Role of Classis in the Twenty-First Century. Home Missions and CRC Publications have worked together to produce Coffee Break materials and other evangelistic resources. Calvin Theological Seminary has participated with World Missions and Home Missions in courses geared to special mission training. Other examples could also be given.

Part of the reason God has used the CRC to the extent that he has is that the denominational structure is such that gifted persons can be selected by classis in the area of their gifts, for service on many of our denominational committees. We are also thankful for the contact that we have with our denominational agencies through those we have sent to represent us. They have been faithful in their reports to us. (Here we want to acknowledge that we have lost some directness of contact with the agencies since the agencies are no longer allowed to compile reports related to their work for our delegates to sign and adopt as their own. Centralization of reports has not served us well at classis. We have also lost contact with Calvin College and Calvin Seminary since they have gone to governing boards that are no longer composed of one delegate per classis.)

Even though there is in place a committee structure that reaches millions of people in more than thirty countries around the world, the Structure Committee report says, "Some adjustments in both the structure for denominational governance and the supports for ministry are required to implement effectively the vision which the CRC has embraced." In the report, the word *adjustment*, used some thirty-nine times, usually means "discontinuation and replacement." The committee's adjustments to the structure that has given us an effective worldwide ministry include the following:

A. Discontinuing the classically based governance committees for CRWRC, Home Missions, Publications, and World Missions and discontinuing governance authority for The Back to God Hour and Pastoral Ministries.

B. Replacing the governing authority of the above committees with a single, larger Board of Trustees (BOT). The BOT will also have self-appointing authority to select from two names suggested by each classis.

C. Replacing the articles of incorporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the above ministry agencies with articles that will give more authority to the BOT.

D. Requiring all classes to form classical ministries committees.

The Structure Committee report recommends "that synod require each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee" (p. 352). Classis Pella formed a classical ministries committee (CMC) in 1992. At that time we discontinued our Diaconal Committee and Home Missions Committee so that we could have a more wholistic ministry through a CMC. The result was that wholistic ministry did not function as well under the new structure as under the old. The committee focused mainly on diaconal interests, which were needed, but the ministry of home missions did not get the same emphasis. This lapse was a contributing factor in the closing of two organized congregations in Classis Pella that were started through the efforts of denominational Home Missions. In our classis meeting of September 1997 we unanimously decided to discontinue the CMC and return to the structure of separate diaconal and home-missions committees. Both are needed. It is good to observe the renewed interest in both areas so that wholistic ministry is being accomplished. (We note that members of the Structure Committee were present at the September 1997 meeting of Classis Pella at which the vote to discontinue our CMC was taken, but we find nothing in their report that gives any hint of problems with the formation of a classical ministries committee.) Classis Pella, having unanimously approved discontinuing its CMC, will not be very likely in the near future to accept the proposed requirement of having such a committee again.

We would also call to the attention of synod that requiring each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee is a Church Order change and, therefore, should follow the rules for such a change. We note the following requirements of the Church Order:

> Article 75
>
> a. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks, each classis shall have a classical home missions committee.
> b. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their ministry of mercy. The classes themselves may perform this ministry when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer this task, each classis shall have a classical diaconal committee.

If synod now requires that each classis have a CMC, such a requirement needs to follow the same rules that led to the inclusion of home-missions and diaconal committees in Article 75.

Another Church Order change will be required in Articles 76 and 77:

Article 76

a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism, and shall also carry on such home missions activities as are beyond their scope and resources. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

b. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministry of mercy, and shall carry on such work as is beyond their scope and resources. Synod shall appoint a diaconal committee to administer the denominational ministry of mercy. The work of this committee shall be governed by synodical regulations.

Article 77

a. Synod shall determine the field in which the joint world mission work of the churches is to be carried on, regulate the manner in which this task is to be performed, provide for its cooperative support, and encourage the congregations to call and support missionaries. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational world missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

In the adjustments suggested for the new structure, the denominational diaconal committee, the denominational home-missions committee, and the denominational world-missions committee would discontinue their work of administration and instead be changed to committees of advice.

Classis Pella also notes the tendency toward hierarchical governance that the Structure Committee recommends. The committee says,

One of the most difficult issues the committee struggled with was the balance between efficient governance and the need for wide involvement in decision making. Neither extreme—strict hierarchy or constant second-guessing—is acceptable. Yet the committee believes that moving the weight a bit farther toward effective governance, while retaining significant checks and balances, is the best approach.

(*Agenda for Synod 1999,* p. 342)

This hierarchical direction is not in harmony with Reformed theology. In Acts 6, focus was needed for the work of those who served to meet the physical needs of others. Focus was also needed for those who preached the Word. There was some overlapping of responsibility, but there was no hierarchical structure put into place. All worked with enthusiasm. Wholistic ministry was done out of need and not out of continuing control by the apostles.

Finally, Classis Pella has recently been saddened by division that has taken place at First Christian Reformed Church of Pella. One of the reasons for the schism was the CRC's movement away from classical representation on denominational boards and its placing of governance authority into fewer hands farther away from the church. Influence and interest go together. With a decline of influence because fewer persons are selected by classis (e.g., changed structure of the Calvin College board and the direction of the Structure Committee report), there has also been a decline of interest in the denomination.

II. Overture

Classis Pella overtures synod to adopt the following recommendations:

A. That synod allow all the agencies to retain the current size of their boards in order to meet the varying needs of the agencies.

Grounds:

1. In response to three overtures in 1993 and four overtures in 1996, synod has twice expressed a desire to allow denominational agencies to retain the committee structure of one delegate per classis. We note that this very important information was nowhere referred to in the Structure Committee report. Synod has not been going in the direction of centralization that the structure report seems to imply. Advisory Committee 2 of Synod 1996 states, "It appears that succeeding synods have become less confident that reducing the size of boards is of itself a necessary part of denominational reorganization" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 476).

2. Some agencies depend on their current board structures to function as important parts of their communication networks, as resources for financial development, and as channels for input from the classes on agency plans and activities.

3. This arrangement will allow for continued denominational ownership of the agencies. Even congregations that have separated from the CRC still appreciate and support some of our mission agencies. It is doubtful that this loyalty will continue if the agencies become only advisory committees to the BOT.

4. A move toward centralization and more authority for the BOT is perceived as harmful at a time when many church members are already concerned about bureaucracy and distance between the local churches and the administrative center. We do not believe regional ministry centers will offset this perception.

5. The savings achieved by having one enlarged board and smaller advisory committees may be offset by the added costs of salaried positions and replacement structures for communication and other functions now done by board representatives.

B. That synod require the Board of Trustees to develop common North American geographic regions within which all CRC agencies will conduct their work (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 307, 321, and 330-31).

Grounds:

1. The formation of regions would provide a way to address concerns common to two or more classes.

2. Such regions would be helpful for integrated planning and ministry.

3. Such regions would facilitate agency cooperation in their contact with the congregations.

C. That synod, through the office of the general secretary, seek out information from classes that have or have had classical ministries committees and distribute such information—both negative and positive—to all the classes.

Ground: Such sharing of information can be helpful to a classis that might consider such changes.

D. That in the third year of their operation, synod review the regional ministry teams already approved for the Canadian structure.

Ground: Since the Canadian structure is in place, the review of Canadian regional ministry teams should provide helpful information.

E. That synod require members of the Board of Trustees regularly to attend classis meetings to report on the work of the BOT and to receive input from the classes.

Ground: Board members need to be responsible to the church and receive its guidance.

F. That synod appoint a Problem Resolution Board (PRB).

1. Purpose: To mediate, on behalf of synod, the conflicts and disagreements that may rise between the policies and decisions of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the policies and decisions regulating internal operations made by the boards of the various agencies of the Christian Reformed Church.

2. Mandate: The PRB will

   a. Monitor the policies, decisions, and ongoing work of the Board of Trustees and the agencies of the CRCNA with a view to meeting the purpose described above.

   b. Communicate to the BOT and the boards of the various agencies of the CRC its availability for mediation as described in the purpose statement above, according to the various mandates which govern the work of the BOT and the agencies.

   c. Respond to requests for mediation by assessing whether a response would be appropriate, investigate the contentions raised, and render a clear judgment. Such judgments shall be considered binding, with appeal only to synod.

   d. Present to the annual meeting of synod an account of its work, which shall then be upheld or contravened by synod.

3. Composition
   Five West Michigan classes shall each select one of their members to serve a three-year term on the PRB, the convening chair to be determined by rotation.

   Grounds:
   a. Such an arrangement can deal with differences as they arise without setting up a hierarchical structure.
   b. The Church Order has given administrative authority to the denominational agencies.
   c. The Structure Committee does a good job of reporting the problems that occur when the governance authorities of the BOT and the agency boards overlap and clash. This clash can be resolved by discontinuing BOT governance over the internal operations of ministry agencies.
   d. The BOT already exercises too much power over the internal operations of ministry agencies. An example of this power is that the BOT, through the executive director of ministries (EDM), has pressured the World Missions Committee to place all missionaries under the Hay Salary Scale even though this is not the desire of World Missions' staff and is overwhelmingly against the desire of our missionaries. One missionary has written to some of our congregations,

Some of the top directors of our denomination want to change the way our salary is paid. For as many years as I can remember every missionary, no matter what the position, received the same base salary. Now they want to change this so that our salary is determined by our position and by how much responsibility we have. The term "missionary" is not considered a position. Almost everyone on the Nigerian field is opposed to this new salary structure. We have always considered all of us equal, and it is difficult for us to understand why our denominational leaders are so determined to make these changes.

G. That synod *not* expand the size and governance of the BOT.

Grounds:
1. The Structure Committee grounds its recommendations in a business model, the "Vision 21" report, and the need for harmony. Harmony is not guaranteed. Tension in Classis Pella increased with the merging of ministry areas into CMC. Any tension between different ministry agencies could easily become tensions on the BOT.
2. There is no provision made so that the BOT will not become overly enthusiastic about a particular area of ministry while not giving the same degree of emphasis to other areas of needed ministry.
3. Putting all governance into the hands of the BOT
   a. Places too much authority in the hands of a few, and loss of influence from the congregations will bring a loss of interest.
   b. Makes the excessive demand that the BOT be well informed in many different ministry areas or else give rubber-stamp approval to staff recommendations.
4. The direction that the Structure Committee is recommending has been a reason for schism in Classis Pella.
5. The BOT already exercises too much power over ministry agencies.

H. That synod *not* require each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee.

Grounds:
1. Classis Pella and Classis Holland are (to our knowledge) the only classes that have had classical ministries committees for a number of years, and both classes have discontinued such structure.
2. Such a structure in Classis Pella contributed to increased tensions between diaconal and home-missions needs.
3. The recommendation of the Structure Committee is not clear enough with respect to the discontinuation of home-missions committees and diaconal committees.

I. That synod *not* approve the change of name from the Ministries Coordinating Council to the Ministries Administrative Team and the expected change in function.

Ground: Giving such authority to a Ministries Administrative Team is against Church Order Articles 76 and 77, where administrative authority has already been assigned.

J. That synod *not* approve the development of ministry councils to support The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Christian Reformed Home

Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Pastoral Ministries to replace current governance.

Grounds:
1. Such a change goes against Church Order Articles 76 and 77, which give administration of home-missions activities to a denominational home-missions committee, diaconal activities to a denominational diaconal committee, and world-missions activities to a denominational world-missions committee.
2. The Structure Committee recommends that the BOT "would have over-sight of all matters except those which synod entrusted to the respective boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 307-08). The reason synod has entrusted governance to the respective boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary is that educational accrediting associations wisely realize the value of having governance boards that can focus on the direct purpose of an institution. Specific governance focus through agency boards is also needed for the variety of ministry areas that God has called us to. Broad and unifying direction must remain under the governance of synod.
3. Degrading agency boards to nongoverning ministry councils will leave a void in agency enthusiasm and a loss of contact with the church, which parachurch organizations will readily fill.

K. That synod *not* require the Board of Trustees to convene an advisory group to review denominational structure annually, beginning in 2001.

Ground: Agencies need to get on with their work of ministry instead of spending so much time on structural changes.

L. That synod acknowledge that approval of the above recommendations also implies the following:

1. That synod *not* approve the suggested adjustments in the Canadian governance structure required for effective binational ministry, as detailed in Appendix B of the Structure Committee's report.

2. That synod *not* direct the Board of Trustees to prepare proposals for the amendment of its constitution and bylaws and the bylaws of the various corporate entities in order to bring them into conformity with this report and to present such changes for approval to Synod 2000.

3. That synod *not* assign responsibility for implementation of the approved changes to the current CRCNA Board of Trustees with advice from a transition task force composed of selected members of both the Canadian and U.S. structure committees.

4. That synod *not* approve the needed restructuring of the legal incorporation of the CRCNA with subsidiary and affiliated corporations to accomplish the goals described in the Structure Committee report.

M. That synod discharge the committee with thanks for its work.

<div align="center">
Classis Pella
Robert J. Timmer, stated clerk
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Overture 13: Make Modifications in the Recommendations of the
Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S.

I. Background

The recommendations of the synodical Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the United States are far-reaching and important. Classis Lake Erie is very appreciative of the care and hard work that are evident in the synodical committee's report and plan. We believe that these proposals, if properly implemented, can enhance both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the ministries of our denomination and our churches. We recommend that synod support the general direction of these proposals.

While recommending overall support for the proposals, we do have a number of concerns. We believe that the committee proposals can be strengthened by a few modifications. Our concerns are as follows:

A. Concerns about the relationship of the proposed regional offices to the classes

1. Since we believe that the regional offices are a key part of the plan, we are concerned that the only commitment to regional offices evident in the plan is two pilot projects. We recommend that a strong commitment be made to the concept of providing integrated and close access to denominational services, whether through regional offices or some equivalent plan.

2. We have some concern that the pilot regional offices will be under the leadership of a person whose primary loyalty will be to one of the agencies. We wonder whether employing such persons will compromise the goal of providing overall integration of services.

3. We suggest that, instead of providing regional offices with classical advisers, the regional staff be urged to attend and participate in as much as possible the meetings of the classical ministry committees, which have official status in the classical structure. This arrangement would tie the regional offices of the agencies to the classes in a stronger way.

4. We believe that clarification should be provided with respect to the relationship of the classes to the agencies. We believe that synod should state that agency projects within a classis require the approval of the classis.

B. Concerns related to the power of the Board of Trustees to make appointments and control nominations

1. On page 382 of the U.S. Structure Committee's report, the implementation document grants the Board of Trustees the right to review nominations from the classes and select those who will serve as board members. The reason given for this procedure is to provide balance among clergy and laity. We support concerns for proper balances on the board—not only clergy/lay but also gender and ethnic balances—but we believe this important function should be separated from the Board of Trustees so that the Board cannot be accused of shaping its own membership.

2. We also wonder why it is necessary to require that classical delegates be either present or past holders of office in the Christian Reformed Church.

Isn't the classical nomination itself sufficient warrant for the person's suitability for appointment?

3. In general, we believe that synod must assure that the principle of classical representation on the Board not be compromised by the Board of Trustees' exercising control over the nomination process.

4. In the same section of the report (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 383), the Board of Trustees is also given the responsibility to "shape" the new ministry councils. We believe that it would be much better if the agencies (divisions, under the new plan) would shape the ministry councils, since these ministry councils will be working with and helping to shape the ministries of these agencies.

C. Concerns about the increased power of the Board of Trustees

Over the past few years Classis Lake Erie has overtured synod a number of times because the Board of Trustees authorized the presentation of reports to synod without giving churches and classes the time specified in synodical regulations to consider those reports. In addition, the Board of Trustees has encouraged a top-down approach to ministry planning in which the Board of Trustees and the agencies set goals for the congregations. Classis Lake Erie understands the Christian Reformed Church to be a covenant of congregations. The agencies serve these congregations by enabling them to do together what they could not do separately. In doing so, the congregations, whether small or large, retain their proper authority. When the Board of Trustees makes decisions that directly affect the congregations, it should do so only after consulting with them and receiving appropriate authorization.

Therefore, our classis believes that synod should caution the Board of Trustees and the office of the executive director of ministries in implementing and governing this new structure to respect the authority of synod, to consult with the churches through the classes (not just in Board of Trustees-organized events) and the councils, and to remember that the agencies serve the churches and not the churches the agencies.

II. Overture

In light of these concerns, Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to

A. Commit itself to the concept of providing to the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church integrated and close access to denominational services, whether through regional offices or some equivalent plan, and to the concept of ensuring that the staff of these regional offices work in conjunction with the classical ministries committees in planning and implementing overall ministry strategy for the regions.

B. State clearly that projects sponsored by the denominational agencies within the boundaries of a classis require approval of that classis.

C. Establish a committee separate from the Board of Trustees and from denominational staff to establish and maintain procedures to assure that the proper balance between clergy and lay members on the Board of Trustees be maintained and that concrete steps be taken to assure proportional representation of women and minorities. This committee would report directly to synod.

D. State that all professing members of the Christian Reformed Church in good standing are eligible to serve on the Board of Trustees.

E. State that the Board of Trustees is prohibited from in any way attempting to control the process of nominating and electing classical delegates to the Board of Trustees. At-large delegates are expressly omitted from this rule.

F. Grant to the agency divisions responsibility to shape the proposed ministry councils in accordance with the rules established by the restructuring plan.

G. Caution the Board of Trustees and the office of the executive director of ministries in implementing and governing this new structure to respect the authority of synod, to consult with the churches through the classes and the councils, and to remember that the agencies serve the churches and not the churches the agencies.

Grounds:
1. These recommendations would help meet the Structure Committee's goals of balancing the efficiency provided by centralization of the agencies with the need for the decentralization of denominational services and ministry planning.
2. These recommendations would protect the Board of Trustees from becoming or being perceived as becoming self-perpetuating, which would rob it of the confidence of the churches and make it less able to represent the whole denomination.
3. These recommendations help preserve the authority of the governance structures of our denomination—our councils, classes, and synods.

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Classis Lake Erie
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

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Overture 14: Reject the Recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S. and Adopt Substitute Recommendations

I. Background information

Classis Iakota gives thanks for the many blessings that God has given through the ministries and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. According to the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S., "Our current denominational structures for ministry and governance have, in general, worked well in the past. They have allowed the CRC to build a wide range of denominational ministries" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 311). "The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church reach millions of people in more than thirty countries around the world. The breadth of these ministries demonstrates the denomination's obedience to the Great Commission. The Christian Reformed Church has been blessed beyond measure with resources and people who are committed to being the 'salt of the earth'" (Web page of the CRCNA).

Part of the reason God has used the CRC to the extent that he has is that the denominational structure is such that gifted persons can be selected by classis, in the area of their gifts, for service on many of our denominational commit-

tees. We are also thankful for the contact that we have with our denominational agencies through those we have sent to represent us. They have been faithful in their reports to us. (Here we want to acknowledge that we have lost some directness of contact with the agencies since the agencies are no longer allowed to compile reports related to their work for our delegates to sign and adopt as their own. Centralization of reports has not served us well. We have also lost contact with Calvin Seminary since it has gone to a board structure that is no longer composed of one delegate per classis.)

Even though there is in place a committee structure that reaches millions of people in more than thirty countries around the world, the Structure Committee report says, "Some adjustments in both the structure for denominational governance and the supports for ministry are required to implement effectively the vision which the CRC has embraced." In the report, the word *adjustment*, used some thirty-nine times, usually means "discontinuation and replacement." The committee's adjustments to the structure that has given us an effective worldwide ministry include the following:

A. Discontinuing the classically based governance committees for CRWRC, Home Missions, Publications, and World Missions and discontinuing governance authority for The Back to God Hour and Pastoral Ministries.

B. Replacing the governing authority of the above committees with a single, larger Board of Trustees (BOT). The BOT will also have self-appointing authority to select from two names suggested by each classis.

C. Replacing the articles of incorporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the above ministry agencies with articles that will give more authority to the BOT.

D. Requiring all classes to form classical ministries committees.

The Structure Committee report recommends "that synod require each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 352). One classis (Classis Pella) formed a classical ministries committee (CMC) in 1992. At that time it discontinued its diaconal committee and home-missions committee so that it could have a more wholistic ministry through a CMC. The result was that wholistic ministry did not function as well under the new structure as it did under the old. At the Classis Pella meeting of September 1997 it was unanimously decided to discontinue the CMC and return to the structure of separate diaconal and home-missions committees. Both are needed. It is good to observe the renewed interest in both areas so that wholistic ministry is being accomplished. (Members of the Structure Committee were present at the September 1997 meeting of Classis Pella at which the vote to discontinue the CMC was taken, but there is nothing in their report that gives any hint of problems with the formation of a classical ministries committee.) Classis Pella, having unanimously approved discontinuing its CMC, will not be very likely in the near future to meet the proposed requirement of having such a committee again.

Classis Iakota also calls to the attention of synod that requiring each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee is a Church Order change and, therefore, should follow the rules for such a change. We note the following requirements of the Church Order:

Article 75

a. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks, each classis shall have a classical home missions committee.

b. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their ministry of mercy. The classes themselves may perform this ministry when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer this task, each classis shall have a classical diaconal committee.

If synod now requires that each classis have a CMC, such a requirement needs to follow the same rules that led to the inclusion of home-missions and diaconal committees in Article 75.

Another Church Order change will be required in Articles 76 and 77:

Article 76

a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism, and shall also carry on such home missions activities as are beyond their scope and resources. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

b. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministry of mercy, and shall carry on such work as is beyond their scope and resources. Synod shall appoint a diaconal committee to administer the denominational ministry of mercy. The work of this committee shall be governed by synodical regulations.

Article 77

a. Synod shall determine the field in which the joint world mission work of the churches is to be carried on, regulate the manner in which this task is to be performed, provide for its cooperative support, and encourage the congregations to call and support missionaries. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational world missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

In the adjustments recommended for the new structure, the denominational diaconal committee, the denominational home-missions committee, and the denominational world-missions committee would discontinue their work of administration and instead be changed to committees of advice.

Classis Iakota also notes the tendency toward hierarchical governance that the Structure Committee report demonstrates. The committee says,

One of the most difficult issues the committee struggled with was the balance between efficient governance and the need for wide involvement in decision making. Neither extreme—strict hierarchy or constant second-guessing—is acceptable. Yet the committee believes that moving the weight a bit farther toward effective governance, while retaining significant checks and balances, is the best approach.

(*Agenda for Synod 1999,* p. 342)

This hierarchical direction is not in harmony with Reformed theology. In Acts 6, focus was needed for the work of those who served to meet the physical needs of others. Focus was also needed for those who preached the Word. There was some overlapping of responsibility, but there was no hierarchical structure put into place. All worked with enthusiasm. Wholistic ministry was done out of need and not out of continuing control by the apostles.

Finally, Classis Iakota notes that one of the reasons for lessened interest in denominational activities is the CRC's moving away from classical representation on denominational boards and its placing governance authority into fewer hands farther away from the local churches. Influence and interest go together. With a decline of influence because fewer persons are selected by classis (e.g., changed structure of boards and the direction of the Structure Committee report), there has also been a decline of interest in the denomination.

II. Overture

Classis Iakota therefore overtures synod to adopt the following recommendations:

A. That synod allow all the agencies to retain the current size of their boards in order to meet the varying needs of the agencies.

Grounds:
1. Some agencies depend on their current board structures to function as important parts of their communication networks, as resources for financial development, and as channels for input from the classes on agency plans and activities.
2. The savings achieved by having one enlarged board and smaller advisory committees may be offset by added costs of replacement structures for communication and other functions now done by board representatives.
3. This arrangement will allow for continued denominational ownership of the agencies. Even congregations that have separated from the CRC still appreciate and support some of our mission agencies. It is doubtful that this loyalty will continue if the agencies become only advisory committees to the BOT.
4. A move toward centralization and more authority for the BOT is perceived as harmful at a time when many church members are already concerned about bureaucracy and distance between the local churches and the administrative center. We do not believe regional ministry centers will offset this perception.
5. Even some companies are moving away from centralized management. Witness the fact that IBM has re-formed itself as several smaller companies, each dedicated to a particular task.

B. That synod *not* adopt the principles and guidelines for organizational structure in Section II of the Structure Committee report.

Grounds:
1. The Structure Committee grounds its recommendations in a business model, the "Vision 21" report, and the need for harmony. Harmony is not guaranteed. Any tensions between different ministry agencies could easily become tensions on the BOT.
2. The original reasons given by synod in favor of denominational restructuring include the necessity of reducing administrative costs, but by the committee's own admission, this proposed new structure is not designed to reduce such costs.

3. There is no provision made so that the BOT will not become overly enthusiastic about a particular area of ministry while not giving the same degree of emphasis to other areas of needed ministry.

4. In response to three overtures in 1993 and four overtures in 1996, synod has twice expressed a desire to allow denominational agencies to retain the committee structure of one delegate per classis. We note that this very important information was nowhere referred to in the Structure Committee report. Synod has not been moving in the direction of centralization that the report seems to imply.

5. Putting all governance into the hands of the BOT places too much authority in the hands of a few, and loss of influence from the congregations will bring a loss of interest.

6. Putting all governance into the hands of the BOT eliminates the checks and balances of the present system of denominational agency boards, Ministries Coordinating Council, and BOT.

7. The BOT already exercises too much power over ministry agencies. An example of this power is that the BOT through the executive director of ministries (EDM) has pressured the World Missions Committee to place all missionaries under the Hay Salary Scale even though this is not the desire of World Missions' staff and is overwhelmingly against the desire of the missionaries. One missionary has written,

> For as many years as I can remember every missionary, no matter what the position, received the same base salary. Now they want to change this so that our salary is determined by our position and by how much responsibility we have. The term "missionary" is not considered a position. Almost everyone on the Nigerian field is opposed to this new salary structure. We have always considered all of us equal, and it is difficult for us to understand why our denominational leaders are so determined to make these changes.

C. That synod not require each CRC classis to organize a classical ministries committee.

Grounds:
1. This would require Church Order changes.
2. The recommendation of the Structure Committee is not clear enough with respect to the discontinuation of home-missions committees and diaconal committees.
3. Such a structure in one classis contributed to increased tensions between diaconal and home-missions needs.

D. That synod, through the office of the general secretary, seek out information from classes that have or have had classical ministries committees and distribute such information—both negative and positive—to all the classes.

Ground: Such sharing of information can be helpful to a classis that might consider such changes.

E. That in the third year of their operation, synod review the regional ministry teams already approved for the Canadian structure.

Ground: Since the Canadian structure is in place, the review of Canadian regional ministry teams should provide helpful information.

F. That synod *not* approve the change of name from the Ministries Coordinating Council to the Ministries Administrative Team and the expected change in function.

Ground: Giving such authority to a Ministries Administrative Team violates Church Order Articles 76 and 77.

G. That synod encourage members of the Board of Trustees regularly to attend classis meetings to report on the work of the BOT and to receive input from classes.

H. That synod *not* approve the development of ministry councils to support The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Pastoral Ministries to replace current governance.

Grounds:
1. Such a change goes against Church Order Articles 76 and 77, which give administration of home-missions activities to a denominational home-missions committee, diaconal activities to a denominational diaconal committee, and world-missions activities to a denominational world-missions committee.
2. The Structure Committee is inconsistent when it recommends that the BOT "would have oversight of all matters except those which synod entrusted to the respective boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 307-08). Synod has also entrusted administration to a denominational home-missions committee, a denominational diaconal committee, and a denominational world-missions committee. The Structure Committee report gives no rationale for why what synod has entrusted to the three above-mentioned committees should be set aside whereas what is entrusted to the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary remains intact.

I. That synod *not* require the Board of Trustees to convene an advisory group to review denominational structure annually, beginning in 2001.

Ground: Agencies need to get on with their work of ministry instead of spending so much time on structural changes.

J. That synod acknowledge that approval of the above recommendations also implies the following:

1. That synod *not* approve the suggested adjustments in the Canadian governance structure required for effective binational ministry, as detailed in Appendix B of the Structure Committee's report.

2. That synod *not* direct the Board of Trustees to prepare proposals for the amendment of its constitution and bylaws and the bylaws of the various corporate entities in order to bring them into conformity with this report and to present such changes for approval to Synod 2000.

3. That synod *not* assign responsibility for implementation of the approved changes to the current CRCNA Board of Trustees with advice from a

transition task force composed of selected members of both the Canadian and U.S. structure committees.

4. That synod *not* approve the needed restructuring of the legal incorporation of the CRCNA with subsidiary and affiliated corporations to accomplish the goals described in the Structure Committee report.

K. That synod discharge the committee with thanks for its work.

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Classis Iakota
Roger W. Sparks, alternate stated clerk

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Overture 15: Not to Adopt the Report and Recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S.

Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures synod not to adopt the report and recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S.

Grounds:
1. Though the report speaks of decentralized ministry, it actually proposes a greater centralized ministry which would seek to govern and direct even the ministries in our classes and local congregations by means of such structures as new classical ministries committees, regional advisory councils, a classically based Board of Trustees, five integrating committees, and ministry councils for the agencies.
2. The proposed Board of Trustees and its accompanying structure would seek to take too much governance and administrative authority, thereby increasing centralization of power and reducing the influence and voice of the local churches.
3. The Structure Committee was mandated by Synod 1996 to "study the structure for ministry in the U.S. and to present to Synod 1998 or 1999 a proposal for an effective structure for enhancing the ministry of our church." However, the Board of Trustees modified this mandate to include "the development of a unified denominational agency structure which is complementary to the already approved Canadian Structure Report." The Board of Trustees approved a direction and solution not warranted by the mandate from synod.
4. The report proposes hiring regional ministry-team leaders to be assisted by a regional advisory council. Such advisory councils would have no authority. Their purpose would be to "help ensure local ownership for the work of the regional ministry team." Without authority, it will be difficult to carry out this responsibility.
5. This report proposes two pilot projects to determine whether or not the proposed regional structures would be effective. It would be wiser to delay implementation and to observe the Canadian structure for three or six years to determine effectiveness. The present structure and operation will not be adversely affected by such a delay in implementation.
6. The proposed restructuring plan speaks of "to govern" rather than "to serve." The servant mindset is lacking in such language as "senior administrative team," Ministries Administrative Team," "senior

executives," "administrative executive team," "executive director of ministries," and "senior staff."

7. The proposed Board of Trustees and its five integrating committees are to govern all denominational affairs. Not only would this arrangement bring about too much centralization of control; a single board could not do justice to the tasks of governance and supervision of all the denominational agencies.

8. The proposed restructuring plan recommends that each denominational agency be supported by a twelve- to sixteen-member advisory council which would function as an operating committee of the Board of Trustees. These ministry councils would form another layer of bureaucracy under the Board of Trustees and its five integrating committees.

9. Too much control and authority would be invested in the Ministries Administrative Team and the executive director of ministries with respect to the selection of persons to serve on the ministry councils.

10. The top-down governance which would control the denomination under the proposed structure becomes evident already in the language of the study committee when it requests synod "to require each Christian Reformed Church classis to organize a classical ministries committee" (p. 352), without consulting with each classis. This requirement proposes top-down direction and planning *for* classes rather than *with* classes.

11. A classically based Board of Trustees should be elected by the classes only, not by synod or the Board of Trustees.

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Classis Northcentral Iowa
David A. Zylstra, stated clerk

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Overture 16: Postpone Action on Restructuring Proposals for at Least One Year

Classis Columbia overtures synod to postpone action on the proposed denominational restructuring plan for at least one year.

Ground: Neither church councils nor denominational agencies (together with their boards) have had adequate opportunity to evaluate the plan.

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Classis Columbia
Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

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Overture 17: Urge Involvement in the Jubilee 2000 Campaign

I. Background

A. Poor nations are overburdened with what seems to be an unending lack of access to resources, a lack created in part by the unpayable burden of debt that they bear. Debt repayments demanded by creditors often constitute more than these countries receive in aid. In addition, the criteria imposed for economic self-sufficiency by international lending agencies often demand that countries

sacrifice social services in the interest of their debt. In such a situation a complete breaking of the cycle seems necessary.

B. Jubilee 2000 is an international movement involving church organizations and other groups calling for the cancellation of the debts of the world's poorest nations. The primary campaign of the movement is the formulation of the largest petition in history for presentation at the G8 meetings in Germany in June 1999. The campaign is also involved in discussions with governments regarding the cancellation of these debts. In some countries the initiative involves action centering upon local and national debt and poverty.

C. Jubilee 2000 is also involved with determining criteria for debt cancellation that will lessen the likelihood of such debt recurring.

D. We understand the Jubilee 2000 concept to

– Call for a new beginning to restore the access of the poor to resources and to relieve them of their debt.
– Accept that God also restores economies with his message.
– Focus on bringing the poor and dispossessed back into the stream of society, not to leave them on the periphery of our society or on the sidewalks of our streets.
– Reassure us that we will be secure in God's land when we obey his commandments.

E. We confess that our world and all those in it belong to God. In light of such a confession we believe that all people should have adequate access to the resources God created for them and have access to a livelihood that will make them able to fulfill their calling. On the basis of God's promises and our hope and trust in God, we call for a jubilee, a new beginning to bring about shalom.

II. Overture

Classis Toronto, in light of its beliefs and the current world situation, overtures synod to urge the denominational agencies, churches, and individual members to engage in education, communication, research, and advocacy to advance the Jubilee 2000 campaign in a way that is integral to the denominational plan, including ecumenical cooperation within existing structures.

Grounds:
A. Scripture portrays a wholistic gospel message for the poor and the outcast.
– Leviticus 25: Proclamation of Jubilee
– Luke 4:16-19[1]
– Isaiah 58:6-10[2]
– I John 3:16-18[3]
– James 2:16-17[4]
B. The confessional documents of the Christian Reformed Church, as well as several synodical decisions, reflect our denomination's concern about the poor of the world.
– Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 42, calls upon us to show integrity in economics.[5]
– Contemporary Testimony: "Our World Belongs to God"

- 1978—World-hunger report: "And He Had Compassion on Them"
- 1980—"For Thy Neighbor's Good"
- 1994—Synodical report: "Freedom to Serve"

C. Such an initiative is supported by the statements of a number of international church bodies with which the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue:
- Reformed Ecumenical Council[6]
- World Evangelical Fellowship/Evangelical Fellowship of Canada/National Association of Evangelicals[7]
- World Council of Churches/National Council of Churches/Canadian Council of Churches[8]
- Southern Partner Churches[9]

Classis Toronto
John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

Notes:

[1] "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'"

[2] "'Here is the way I want you to fast. Set free those who are held by chains without any reason. Untie the ropes that hold people as slaves. Set free those who are crushed. Break every evil chain. Share your food with hungry people. Provide homeless people with a place to stay. Give naked people clothes to wear. Provide for the needs of your own family. Then the light of my blessing will shine on you like the rising sun. I will heal you quickly. I will march out ahead of you. And my glory will follow behind you and guard you. That is because I always do what is right. You will call out to me for help. And I will answer you. You will cry out. And I will say, "Here I am." Get rid of the chains you use to hold others down. Stop pointing your finger at others as if they had done something wrong. Stop saying harmful things about them. Work hard to feed hungry people. Satisfy the needs of those who are crushed. Then my blessing will light up your darkness. And the night of your suffering will become as bright as the noonday sun.'"

[3] "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."

[4] "Suppose a brother or sister is in rags, with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,' but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing." (NEB)

[5] "110 Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?
        A. He forbids not only outright theft and robbery,
           punishable by law.
           But in God's sight theft also includes
           cheating and swindling our neighbor
           by schemes made to appear legitimate,
           such as
               inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume
               fraudulent merchandising
               counterfeit money
               excessive interest
               or any means forbidden by God.

In addition, he forbids all greed
and pointless squandering of his gifts."

"111 Q. What does God require of you
          in this commandment?
       A. That I do whatever I can
             for my neighbor's good,
          that I treat others
             as I would like them to treat me,
          and that I work faithfully
             so that I may share with those in need."

[6] Statements from the Reformed Ecumenical Council:

   a. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to support international efforts to reduce or forgive international debt for highly indebted poor countries of the world. Specifically, in countries where "Jubilee 2000" campaigns are being developed, our members should support and encourage those campaigns.
   b. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches in affluent countries to appeal to their governments for forgiveness of loans, and in future cases where development loans are made, greater transparency and mutual accountability are called for.
   c. The Reformed Ecumenical Council believes that in addition to debt forgiveness to ease the payment burdens, the international community should work toward fairer trade agreements and a wider base for international currency exchange.
   d. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to encourage their governments to work towards internationally accepted standards for "national bankruptcy." This will provide insight into the extent of the burden that international debt imposes on a country, and will create guidelines about how much debt a country can bear.
   e. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to ask their governments to re-examine the conditions that accompany international loans and loan renegotiation, which are imposed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Paris Club of Creditor Nations. These conditions, known popularly as "Structural Adjustment Programs," should be evaluated especially for their impact on the health and education programs of the highly indebted countries. The council stands firmly on the side of the poor, and believes that the prosperous countries must be willing to bear some of the consequences of poor loan decisions made since 1973. The high interest rates of the 1980s, which rebuilt the economies of the wealthy countries, have been a cause of the inability of poorer countries to repay loans negotiated with floating interest rates.

[7] Resolutions are being prepared.

[8] Resolutions are being prepared.

[9] Resolutions are being prepared.

Overture 18: Adopt Statement re Jubilee 2000

Classis Iakota overtures synod to adopt the following statement:

A Call for a New Beginning

Whereas
- Poor nations are overburdened with what seems to be an eternal lack of access to resources,
- The poorest nations of the world are carrying an unpayable debt burden,
- Debt repayments demanded by creditors lead to the cultivation of cash crops that in turn lead to less food sufficiency for developing countries,
- The Jubilee 2000 petition campaign has galvanized support across the church community, and
- God's jubilee is meant to restore right relationships,

Therefore, the CRCNA commits itself to the biblical concept of jubilee and
- Urges its churches and members to commit themselves and take action and the denominational agencies to be responsive to churches and members concerning the jubilee initiative,
- Encourages governments, multinationals, and international institutions to reexamine their own roles in restoring the access of the poor to resources,
- Prepares for the church to grow into a new understanding of the consequences of the Lordship of Christ in our economies,[1]
- Calls for a reexamination of our personal life-style,
- Recommends that CRC members, churches, and agencies participate in initiatives like the Jubilee 2000 debt-cancellation campaign and other initiatives that speak to debt and poverty,
- Endorses the Jubilee 2000/U.S.A. campaign.[2]

In light of our beliefs:

Scriptural teachings
- Leviticus 25 – Jubilee text
- Luke 4:16-19 – Year-of-the-Lord's-favor text[3]
- Isaiah 58:6-10[4]
- 1 John 3:16-18[5]
- James 2:16-17[6]

    These scriptural references portray a wholistic gospel message for the poor and the keepers of the covenant. Obedience to the Lord brings social and economic well-being and forgiveness.

Confessional documents
- Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 42[7]

Synodical affirmations
- Contemporary Testimony – "Our World Belongs to God"
- 1978 World-hunger report – "And He Had Compassion on Them"
- 1994 Synodical report – "Freedom to Serve"

Statements by international church bodies
- Reformed Ecumenical Council[8]
- World Council of Churches[9]

We understand the Jubilee concept to
- Call for a new beginning to restore the access of the poor to resources and to relief from their debt,
- Accept that God also restores our economies with his message,
- Focus on bringing the poor and dispossessed back into the stream of society, not to leave them on the periphery of our society or on the sidewalks of our streets,
- Reassure us that we will be secure in God's land when we obey God's commandments.

In light of our beliefs and the present situation, synod instructs the denominational agencies, churches, and members to engage in education, communication, research, and advocacy around jubilee in a way that is integral to the denominational plan, including ecumenical cooperation within existing structures.

Our world belongs to God, not to creditors. God does not want debts to be eternal because only God is eternal.

God wants all people
- To have adequate access to the resources he created for them,
- To fulfill their calling, and
- To have adequate access to livelihood.

Conclusion
On the basis of God's promises and our hope and trust in God, we call for a jubilee, a new beginning to bring about shalom.

Notes:

[1] "Suppose a brother or sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,' but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing."

[2] The biblical tradition calls for a jubilee year, when slaves are set free and debts canceled. As the new millennium approaches, we are faced with a particularly significant time for such a jubilee. Many impoverished countries carry such high levels of debt that economic development is stifled and scarce resources are diverted from health care, education, and other socially beneficial programs to make debt-service payments. Much of the debt they carry is the result of ill-conceived development, flawed policies that creditors required of recipient countries in exchange for assistance, and shortsighted decisions of their own leaders. Much of the borrowing benefited only elites in receiving countries, whereas the burden of paying the debt is falling upon the most impoverished members of society.

Recognizing that many of these debts are unpayable and exact a great social and environmental toll, the Jubilee 2000 U.S.A. Campaign calls for a time of jubilee and cancellation of debt that includes the following:

a. Definitive cancellation of the crushing international debt in situations where countries burdened with high levels of human need and environmental distress are unable to meet the basic needs of their people or achieve a level of sustainable development that ensures a decent quality of life.

b. Definitive debt cancellation that benefits ordinary people and facilitates their participation in the process of determining the scope, timing and conditions of debt relief, as well as the future direction and priorities of their national and local economies.

c. Definitive debt cancellation that is not conditioned on policy reforms that perpetuate or deepen poverty or environmental degradation.

d. Acknowledgment of responsibility by both lenders and borrowers, and action to recover resources that were diverted to corrupt regimes, institutions, and individuals.

e. Establishment of a transparent and participatory process to develop mechanisms to monitor international monetary flows and prevent recurring destructive cycles of indebtedness.

[3] "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read, and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'"

[4] "'Here is the way I want you to fast. Set free those who are held by chains without any reason. Untie the ropes that hold people as slaves. Set free those who are crushed. Break every evil chain. Share your food with hungry people. Provide homeless people with a place to stay. Give naked people clothes to wear. Provide for the needs of your own family. Then the light of my blessing will shine on you like the rising sun. I will heal you quickly. I will march out ahead of you. And my glory will follow behind you and guard you. That is because I always do what is right. You will call out to me for help. And I will answer you. You will cry out. And I will say, "Here I am." Get rid of the chains you use to hold others down. Stop pointing your finger at others as if they had done something wrong. Stop saying harmful things about them. Work hard to feed hungry people. Satisfy the needs of those who are crushed. Then my blessing will light up your darkness. And the night of your suffering will become as bright as the noonday sun.'"

[5] "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."

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　　　　　cheating and swindling our neighbor
　　　　　by schemes made to appear legitimate,
　　　　　such as
　　　　　　　inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume
　　　　　　　fraudulent merchandising
　　　　　　　counterfeit money
　　　　　　　excessive interest
　　　　　　　or any means forbidden by God.

　　　　　In addition, he forbids all greed
　　　　　and pointless squandering of his gifts."

　"111 Q. What does God require of you
　　　　　in this commandment?
　　　　A. That I do whatever I can
　　　　　　　for my neighbor's good,
　　　　　that I treat others
　　　　　　　as I would like them to treat me,
　　　　　and that I work faithfully
　　　　　　　so that I may share with those in need."

[8] The Reformed Ecumenical Council's statements re Jubilee 2000:

a. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to support international efforts to reduce or forgive international debt for highly indebted poor countries of the world. Specifically, in countries where "Jubilee 2000" campaigns are being developed, our members should support and encourage those campaigns.

b. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches in affluent countries to appeal to their governments for forgiveness of loans, and in future cases where development loans are made, greater transparency and mutual accountability are called for.

c. The Reformed Ecumenical Council believes that in addition to debt forgiveness to ease the payment burdens, the international economic community should work toward fairer trade agreements and a wider base for international currency exchange.

d. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to encourage their governments to work towards internationally accepted standards for "national bankruptcy." This will provide insight into the extent of the burden that international debt imposes on a country, and will create guidelines about how much debt a country can bear.

e. The Reformed Ecumenical Council calls on its member churches to ask their governments to reexamine the conditions that accompany international loans and loan renegotiation, which are imposed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris Club of Creditor Nations. These conditions, known popularly as "Structural Adjustment Programs," should be evaluated especially for their impact on the health and education programs of the highly indebted countries. The council stands firmly on the side of the poor, and believes that the prosperous countries must be willing to bear some of the consequences of poor loan decisions made since 1973. The high interest rates of the 1908s, which rebuilt the economies of the wealthy countries, have been a cause of the inability of poorer countries to repay loans negotiated with floating interest rates.

[9] "'Gathered in sub-Saharan Africa, we have heard the cries of the millions of people who have borne the social, political and ecological costs of the tenacious cycle of debt,' the

Assembly said. The issue was symbolised for it by the biblical tradition under which every seventh year was to be proclaimed a Jubilee, involving release from debts and slavery and restoration of family lands. 'Debt bondage by the poorest countries to Western governments and creditors is today's new slavery.'

"The Assembly appeals to leaders of the G8 nations to cancel the debts of the poorest countries 'to enable them to enter the new millennium with a fresh start,' and to reduce substantially the debts of middle-income countries. There should be a new, independent arbitration process for negotiating debt cancellation.

"The WCC says it 'accepts that tough conditions should be imposed on debtor governments,' but these must not be a prerequisite for cancellation. The conditions for the process should be determined and monitored by community organisations, including the churches. The G8 nations should use their powers to ensure that funds illegitimately transferred to secret foreign bank accounts are returned to debtor nations."

> (World Council of Churches Eighth Assembly, Press Release No. 56, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 15, 1998)

> Classis Iakota
>   Roger Sparks, alternate stated clerk

Overture 19: Permit Transfer of South Bend CRC to Classis Holland

Classis Holland overtures synod to permit the transfer of South Bend Christian Reformed Church of South Bend, Indiana, from Classis Kalamazoo to Classis Holland.

Grounds:
A. South Bend CRC requested this transfer so that its women officebearers may fully exercise the duties of their office by also serving as delegates to classis.
B. Classis Holland has declared the word *male* inoperative in Article 3-a of the Church Order.
C. By decision of classis on January 21, 1999, Classis Holland would welcome South Bend CRC into Classis Holland.

> Classis Holland
>   Ronald D. De Young, stated clerk

Overture 20: Allow Transfer of South Bend CRC to Classis Holland

Classis Kalamazoo overtures synod to accede to the request of South Bend Christian Reformed Church to transfer to Classis Holland according to Church Order Supplement, Article 39, which allows churches to transfer from one classis to another for reasons other than geographic proximity.

Grounds:
1. Although Classis Kalamazoo has voted to declare the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a, it has chosen not to implement all the regulations permitted by Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a (B).
2. According to its classical interim committee, Classis Holland is willing to accept the transfer.

> Classis Kalamazoo
>   Neal R. Rylaarsdam, stated clerk

Overture 21: Not to Adopt the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches but to Appoint a Committee to Restructure the Present FSC Committee

Classis Minnkota overtures synod (1) not to accept the report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches in the CRC but instead (2) to appoint a committee to rename and restructure the existing Fund for Smaller Churches Committee in the following manner:

A. By reinstituting the committee's old name: Fund for Needy Churches (FNC) Committee.

B. By limiting the FNC Committee's work to those small churches which meet the following criteria:

1. They are existing organized congregations.

2. They function in very rural areas where there is little or no potential for numerical growth.

3. They are much involved in being good witnesses for Christ in the communities around them.

4. There are no other like-minded Reformed or Presbyterian churches within twenty-five miles with which they might otherwise merge.

Grounds:
1. There are some churches in our denomination which will most likely never experience sufficient numerical growth to become self-sufficient because of the very rural nature of the areas they serve. Yet these small churches are often very alive and very involved in being good witnesses for Christ in their communities. To stop their funding would most likely be the beginning of the end for them, and that would be a severe loss to the witness of the church of Jesus Christ.
2. These churches do not need to be motivated to adopt new forms of ministry, as will happen if the work of the FSC Committee is given to Home Missions, as the report recommends. Instead, the ministries of these churches have already proved to be effective within the particular contexts in which they exist. They are already being good witnesses for Christ in their rural communities. What these churches need is salary support for their ministers so that they can continue to be good witnesses for Christ in the future.
3. Acceptance of this overture would not prevent FSC (FNC, if adopted) from transferring small, nongrowing churches that are situated in heavily populated areas to Home Missions, from which they could receive assistance and advice on how to better evangelize the urban communities within which they are situated.
4. Acceptance of this overture would allow FSC (FNC, if adopted) to make better use of the funds entrusted to it. It is true that some churches are so inwardly oriented that they will never grow, no matter how large the population surrounding them is. To provide continuing funding for such churches is not a very responsible use of those funds. But churches situated in very rural areas are often very active in ministering to the

surrounding community. They have to be in order to survive. For FSC (FNC, if adopted) to confine its support to this latter group of churches would allow it to use its funds primarily for those churches that really need them and will make good use of them.
5. The proposed name would more appropriately indicate the nature of the churches to which this committee would minister.

<div align="center">
Classis Minnkota
John Kroon, stated clerk
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Overture 22:   Refer the Report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches to the Churches for Study and Response

I. Background

A report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches was mailed to all classes and small churches on January 4, 1999. The cover letter noted that the denominational Board of Trustees might act on the report's recommendations at its February or May meeting and then this matter would be on the agenda of Synod 1999. Churches and classes were invited to comment on this report as soon as possible but no later than April 15. A subsequent mailing from the Board of Trustees indicated that it would act on this report at its February 25-26 meeting. Though Classis Lake Erie has not had an opportunity to discuss this report, our Congregational Life Committee communicated some concerns about the recommendations of the task force to the Board of Trustees.

Once again, Classis Lake Erie is concerned about the process by which this report and its recommendations will be placed on the agenda for synod. The classes and churches have received a draft report which will not be finalized until late February. Thus, two-thirds of the classes, those which meet during the last week of February and the first week of March, will have no opportunity to respond to the draft report or to the final recommendations.

In 1995, when another Fund for Smaller Churches/Christian Reformed Home Missions task force followed the same procedure, Classis Lake Erie asserted in Overture 43 (*Agenda for Synod 1995,* pp. 407-09) that churches and classes ought to have adequate opportunity to respond to final reports, not to draft reports, which may or may not be changed by the time synod considers them. Synod 1995 concurred in this overture and decided "that whenever the Board of Trustees proposed to synod policy changes which would directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes, the Board will follow the schedule for distributing materials that is required of study committees (*Acts of Synod 1995,* pp. 752-53). The ground for synod's action was that "this will allow churches and classes adequate time for response before synod acts on the recommendations" (*Acts of Synod 1995,* p. 753).

The next year, when another committee sent its report in early January, Classis Lake Erie again addressed synod about this matter. In Overture 68 we asked synod "to ensure that study-committee reports and policy changes which directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes be submitted to the churches by November 1" (*Agenda for Synod 1996,* p. 319).

Synod 1996 gave two grounds for not acceding to this overture:

a. The Rules for Synodical Procedure already require that "Study committee reports shall be filed with the general secretary on or before September 15, and the general secretary shall distribute them to the churches no later than November 1" (Rules for Synodical Procedure, V, B, 10).

b. Synod 1995 decided "That whenever the Board of Trustees proposes to synod policy changes which would directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes, the Board will follow the schedule for distributing materials that is required of study committees" (*Acts of Synod 1995,* pp. 752-53).

(*Acts of Synod 1996,* p. 576)

Apparently, synod thought that the mere citing of our existing rules would ensure that the rules would be followed. The way the report on support for smaller churches is being processed illustrates that this is not the case.

Classis Lake Erie takes seriously its denominational responsibilities. We have been very willing to give our input when requested by denominational study committees and/or task forces. We have responded a number of times to matters on the synodical agenda, and we value the opportunity to receive final reports in adequate time to address synod if we so desire. It is discouraging that, for the third time in the past five years, we must ask synod to ensure that synodical rules and decisions regarding reports are honored.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To refer the final report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches to the churches and classes of the denomination for study and response in accordance with synodical rule (". . . whenever the Board of Trustees proposes to synod policy changes which would directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes the Board will follow the schedule for distributing materials that is required of study committees."—*Acts of Synod 1995,* pp. 752-53).

B. To ensure that study-committee reports and policy changes which directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes be submitted to the churches by November 1.

Ground: Such action will demonstrate that synod values the participation of councils and classes in the life of the denomination.

Classis Lake Erie
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 23: Not to Adopt the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches but to Appoint a Committee to Restructure the Present FSC Committee

Classis Iakota overtures synod (1) not to accept the report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches in the CRC but instead (2) to appoint a committee to rename and restructure the existing Fund for Smaller Churches Committee in the following manner.

A. By reinstituting the committee's old name: Fund for Needy Churches (FNC) Committee.

B. By limiting the FNC Committee's work to those small churches which meet the following criteria:

1. They are existing organized congregations.

2. They function in very rural areas where there is little or no potential for numerical growth.

3. They are much involved in being good witnesses for Christ in the communities around them.

4. There are no other like-minded Reformed or Presbyterian churches within twenty-five miles with which they might otherwise merge.

   Grounds:
   a. There are some churches in our denomination which will most likely never experience sufficient numerical growth to become self-sufficient because of the very rural nature of the areas they serve. Yet these small churches are often very alive and very involved in being good witnesses for Christ in their communities. To stop their funding would most likely be the beginning of the end for them, and that would be a severe loss to the witness of the church of Jesus Christ.
   b. These churches do not need to be motivated to adopt new forms of ministry, as will happen if the work of the FSC Committee is given to Home Missions, as the report recommends. Instead, the ministries of these churches have already proved to be effective within the particular contexts in which they exist. They are already being good witnesses for Christ in their rural communities. What these churches need is salary support for their ministers so that they can continue to be good witnesses for Christ in the future.
   c. Acceptance of this overture would not prevent FSC (FNC, if adopted) from transferring small, nongrowing churches that are situated in heavily populated areas to Home Missions, from which they could receive assistance and advice on how to better evangelize the urban communities within which they are situated.
   d. Acceptance of this overture would allow FSC (FNC, if adopted) to make better use of the funds entrusted to it. It is true that some churches are so inwardly oriented that they will never grow, no matter how large the population surrounding them is. To provide continuing funding for such churches is not a very responsible use of those funds. But churches situated in very rural areas are often very active in ministering to the surrounding community. They have to be in order to survive. For FSC (FNC, if adopted) to confine its support to this latter group of churches would allow it to use its funds primarily for those churches that really need them and will make good use of them.
   e. The proposed name would more appropriately indicate the nature of the churches to which this committee would minister.

> Classis Iakota
> Roger Sparks, alternate stated clerk

Overture 24: Mandate Home Missions to Designate Sufficient Money, Staff, and Resources for the Support and Enhancement of Small Churches

Classis Northern Illinois overtures synod

A. To mandate Christian Reformed Home Missions' Established-Church-Development (ECD) Department to designate a portion of its budget, staff, and resources for supporting and enhancing the ministries of small churches. The portion of the ECD funding targeted for small churches should not fall below the proportion of small churches in the denomination.

B. To direct Home Missions' Established-Church-Development Department to consult regularly with experts in both rural and suburban small-church ministry.

Grounds:
1. The needs of small churches are easily overlooked by denominational agencies.
2. Everything possible should be done to enhance the ministry effectiveness and vitality of small churches.
3. The growing number of small churches in our denomination warrants this concern.
4. Adoption of this overture ensures that the financial and developmental needs of the small church will be met.

> Classis Northern Illinois
> Gerald W. Frens, stated clerk

Overture 25: Evaluate the New Living Translation for Use in Worship

Classis British Columbia North-West overtures synod to study the New Living Translation (NLT) to determine whether it should be permitted for use in worship services in our churches.

Grounds:
A. The translators of the Old Testament of the NLT depended upon the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as their standard text as found in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* edition, 1977. They also used the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and many other ancient versions and manuscripts to shed light on the textual problems.

   The translators of the New Testament of the NLT worked from the *Greek New Testament* published by the United Bible Societies (1993) and from the *Novum Testamentum Graece,* edited by Nestle and Aland (twenty-seventh edition, 1993). The vast majority of scholars consider the sources used to be the best basic texts.

B. The NLT is a gender-inclusive, up-to-date, fresh, highly readable translation. Its translators put a high value on its use in public reading.

C. The NLT is rapidly gaining in popularity among Christians of many traditions to such an extent that it appears to be well on its way to becoming an ecumenical translation.

D. A number of scholars in the Christian Reformed Church have lent their expertise to this translation, including Dr. David H. Engelhard (general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America), Dr. Raymond Van Leeuwen (Eastern College), and Dr. Al Wolters (Redeemer College).

<div align="right">Classis British Columbia North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk</div>

Overture 26: Include Diaconate Information in *Yearbook*

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to instruct the office of the general secretary to include in the *Yearbook* the name and telephone number of the secretary of the deacons in each congregation.

Grounds:
1. Correspondence pertaining to the diaconate should be addressed to the deacons.
2. Channeling information through the clerk could cause unnecessary delays.
3. Including this information will facilitate contact between diaconates.

<div align="right">Classis Alberta North
William H. Vanden Born, stated clerk</div>

Overture 27: Suspend the Use of the Inactive-Member Category

I. Background
Synod 1998, in response to an overture expressing concern for a more equitable computation of ministry shares and pension assessments, established a new membership category, that of *inactive member*. In doing so, synod introduced an unnecessary, problematic, ambiguous, and risky conception of membership in the Christian Reformed Church as well as in the broader universal church.

II. Concerns
Classis Eastern Canada has concerns about the absence of a biblical or theological basis for this category. Given our current and historical understanding and practice regarding members placed under our care, we question the appropriateness of creating an entirely new status for membership in the church of Jesus Christ simply for reporting and financial purposes. It raises questions about the issue of labeling and about how we as officebearers treat those in our congregations. It raises questions about our responsibility to and level of care for such members and to what extent these need to be exercised prior to declarations of inactivity. It raises the question of why a new membership category is necessary rather than some clearer guidelines for computation

of ministry shares and pension assessments or some adaptations to existing procedures in order to address the problem of the lack of participation of confessing members.

Furthermore, it is indeed debatable that the new category gives any additional clarity with regard to issues of membership, the new category offering its own difficulties of definition and interpretation.

III. Overture

Classis Eastern Canada overtures synod to suspend the use of the category inactive member.

Grounds:

A. The category inactive member is biblically and confessionally unsupported. It appears to run contrary to the biblical conception of the church, i.e., as a functioning body of Christ (see I Cor. 12) or as a spiritual house of living stones (see I Peter 2). It also appears to run contrary to our confessional statements regarding membership in the church (see Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession or Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism).

B. The category inactive member is itself unclear and without clear guidelines for its appropriate use. For example, how is someone declared an inactive member? Is that person ever informed of this status or not? What constitutes "faithful use" of the means of grace?

C. The category of inactive member may undermine effective and responsible pastoral care to such persons. Transferring individuals to the inactive list could well lessen the church's sense of urgency about their inactivity or the church's resolve to minister to them.

D. The category of inactive member is unnecessary. The issue of equitable calculation of ministry shares could be settled without a new category of church membership. This could be done by changing the method of assessing ministry shares or by evaluating our current guidelines for lapsing those who are no longer active in our churches.

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Classis Eastern Canada
James Kooistra, stated clerk
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Overture 28: Permit a Variant Procedure for Admitting Children to the Lord's Supper

I. Background

A. On November 22, 1995, the council of Ancaster Christian Reformed Church, Ancaster, Ontario, adopted the following procedure to regulate the admittance of baptized covenant children to the Lord's Supper.

> A. The church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper baptized covenant children who give evidence of faith and of the Holy Spirit's work in their life and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Grounds:
1. The Bible makes clear that participation in the Lord's Supper is a result of status in the covenant (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; cf. Exodus 12, 13, 24:4-11; I Cor. 10:1-4; Eph. 2:11-13) and also entails acting in faith on the part of those participating (I Cor. 11:23-29; John 6:35; Luke 22:19).
2. In baptism God seals the promise of the covenant made with Abraham and believing parents who have publicly professed their faith. Participation in the Lord's Supper indicates an individual acceptance of these promises through faith.
3. Our confessions teach the necessity of faith for participation in the Lord's Supper. The Heidelberg Catechism explains that participants in the sacrament "accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Jesus" (Q. and A. 76). The Belgic Confession states that the sacrament of the Holy Supper was instituted "to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and engrafted into His family: His Church."
4. Participation in the Lord's Supper is also a means of grace to nourish and strengthen faith. Hence, participants in the Lord's Supper make a public affirmation of a desire to grow in faith, obedience, and love. The Belgic Confession testifies (Art. 33) that the sacraments are given by God "because of our weakness and infirmities . . . (and thus) the better to present to our senses both what He declares to us by His Word and that which He works inwardly in our hearts."

B. The church is to assure itself of such faith of a baptized covenant child and her/his desire for spiritual growth by the testimony of the believing parent(s).

Grounds:
1. The parent(s) of baptized children have first and primary responsibility for nurturing the faith of their baptized children, in accordance with the vows made at baptism.
2. Participation in the Lord's Supper is a testimony of faith that has reached the point of personal conviction concerning the gospel of salvation and a faith that still is growing in knowledge and greater conviction of the way of salvation.
3. Believing parents present their children for baptism because the promises of God are for children as well as adults. Believing parents present their believing children for communion. Children of believers are holy (I Cor. 7:14).
4. Parents are in a better position to determine the genuineness of a child's request than a church consistory is.

C. Children who express a desire to participate in communion should ask for permission of church consistory, through their parent(s). Consistory investigating and being convinced of the integrity of this request, because of the faith and responsible witness of the parents, may announce the name of the child who will be granted this privilege.

Ground: This practice honours the responsibility consistory has towards communion participation that is done in good faith and is publicly recognized.

D. Permission for communion participation is given to baptized children at the discretion of their (the) parent(s), each time communion is celebrated. The Consistory gives believing parents the right and the duty to supervise the child's participation so that faith is nurtured in participation and the Table is guarded against frivolous or faithless participation.

Ground: Parents are in a better position to judge the faith development of their child(ren) than a Consistory.

E. At the age of discretion, when a believing baptized child wishes to take personal responsibility for their faith and life in the Lord Jesus and in His church, and when they no longer wish to ask parental permission for participation in communion, they shall make public profession of faith.

Grounds:
1. Public profession of faith is the fruit of faith nurtured by Word and sacrament.
2. Public profession of faith must also attest to loyalty to the Body of Christ.

Supplementary notes:

1. It is understood in (D.) that a child would participate only if and when a believing participating parent joins the child in the celebration of communion. This is symbolic of the covenant bond of responsibility parents have towards their children. No child would take communion alone.

2. Should parental participation be denied, the child must respect the discretion of the parent. At the age of discretion (14-18+), parents should encourage the child to ask consistory for permission to participate in communion, thereby taking steps toward public profession of faith and full communion privileges as an adult.

(Adopted in Council November 22, 1995)

B. The following paragraphs present further argumentation and identify some of the ways in which this procedure varies from the decision taken by Synod 1995 regarding children at the Lord's Supper:

The procedure adopted by Synod 1995 for permitting children at communion makes it clear that a credible profession of faith must be made by the child and that this profession, made in a simple and appropriate manner, must occur in a worship service.

This profession of faith, made according to the procedure suggested by synod, is a public acknowledgment that the faith of the one professing has achieved some discretion about our Lord Jesus. It also tells of love for him and testifies to some awareness of the meaning and message of communion.

This profession of faith, as suggested by synod, is not the official recognition (as traditionally understood) of a faith that has achieved mature discretion and a willingness to assume mature responsibilities in the visible body of Christ, the church. Profession of faith was traditionally the step the believing child took from being a covenant (of grace) minor to a covenant adult.

Synod 1995 suggested that official, mature, adult membership in the visible body of Christ be declared or recognized formally some years later in the child's life, but it offered no suggestions regarding when or how.

It is on this particular part of the process that Ancaster CRC's procedure differs from that of Synod 1995. Ancaster CRC insists that a child who wishes to join in communion must make a credible profession of faith to the consistory by way of interview by the pastor and an elder, who then bring a recommendation to the full consistory to grant (or deny) the child's request. The child must give evidence of discretionary faith (at his or her level) as to the meaning and message of communion and of his or her love for the Lord.

The name of the child is then announced in church, and the child is welcomed as a participant at the table. There is no indication in this process that the child has done anything except to ask, "May I participate in communion with my parents and others to strengthen what I believe about Jesus and his love for me?"

Article 33 of the Belgic Confession states that our good God, "mindful of our crudeness and weakness," has "ordained sacraments for us . . . to repre-

sent better to our external senses both what he enables us to understand by his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts. . . . "

Children born of believing parents are entitled to receive the sacrament of baptism, as our Form for Baptism indicates, because the covenant of grace embraces them as well as the parent(s). The parent(s) has (have) the privilege and responsibility to raise their children in the fear and knowledge of God and the life-style of children "set apart by baptism as God's own children."

The sacrament of communion is a means to nurture that faith and life-style. Children participate in this sacrament of the new covenant by virtue of their faith and the faith of their parents and under their supervision. In this way communion is a God-given means to nurture and motivate a public profession of faith, as traditionally understood in the CRC.

Public profession of faith, as traditionally understood in the CRC, has had two foci. One is a public acknowledgment of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (head knowledge and heart knowledge), and the other is marking the transition from being a covenant minor to a covenant major, i.e., the child becomes a full, participating member in the church with the responsibilities of serving, voting, etc. (one of those responsibilities is participating in communion).

Ancaster CRC believes that it is important to retain this traditional understanding of public profession of faith—the public declaration of loyalty to Jesus Christ and the public declaration of loyalty to his church. Therefore, the Ancaster council seeks to bear out what Romans 10:9 implies, that public profession of faith is the ultimate expression of a life given to Jesus Christ. It seeks to emphasize that public profession of faith is a mature discerning of the body of Christ in the sacrament and also a mature discernment of the body of Christ that celebrates the sacrament.

The practice presently recommended by synod's model has no provision for a mature public ownership of covenant duties in the church. The child acknowledges Jesus as Lord in a public profession of faith, but there is no provision for publicly declaring loyalty to his church. The Ancaster council fears that children who have the privileges of full communion as youngsters may not make that public decision to join the church and take on its responsibilities as adults. In this age of interdenominationalism and "church hopping," the church can and should insist on loyalty to what we call "the body of Christ," the other "body" also discerned in communion.

C. In May 1997 Classis Hamilton was again overtured to approve the use of this alternative procedure. Classis defeated the overture on the ground that it was at variance with Synod 1995's decision regarding children at the Lord's Supper. When overtured in January 1999 to present this request to synod, Classis Hamilton adopted the overture, believing that only synod can make exceptions to its decisions.

II. Overture
Classis Hamilton overtures synod to permit the use of the procedure adopted and used by Ancaster CRC in admitting children to the Lord's Supper.

Grounds:
A. This alternative procedure allows churches to retain the traditional public ceremony of official, mature membership in the organized church while at the same time allowing for child participation in communion.
B. This alternative procedure also insists that participation in communion rests on evidence of faith.
C. Parental supervision of the child's participation in communion honors the covenantal vows made at the child's baptism, i.e., "Do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in your power to instruct these children in the Christian faith and to lead them by your example to be Christ's disciples?"

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Classis Hamilton
Jacob Kerkhof, stated clerk

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COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 1: Council of First CRC, Sheldon, Iowa

Regarding the report of the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry," we suggest that synod not adopt Recommendation E, 1 and 2, and the changes in the Church Order that would result from such an adoption.

Grounds:
1. No scriptural grounds are given to warrant such a recommendation.
2. The privilege of creating and defining church offices is left to Christ, who revealed them through his apostles.

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Council of First CRC, Sheldon, Iowa
Charles Vaandrager, clerk

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Communication 2: Classis Illiana

I. Background

Pension plans are of two kinds. One is a *defined-benefit plan*, which simply awards certain limited benefits at retirement to anyone eligible in the plan. The second kind of pension plan is a *defined-contribution plan*. Under this kind of plan, the money contributed by participants or their employers is invested for them, but the participants retain ownership of the money invested for them. Annual statements are sent to all contributors informing them of the progress of the fund and their share of entitlement.

The Christian Reformed Church's ministers' pension plans (U.S. and Canadian) are defined-benefit plans. The only public report on the status of these funds is to be found annually in a report included in the *Agenda for Synod.* No minister knows the amount of the contributions made by his/her church during his/her years of ministry because the funds are held in a general account without any specifications. The alarming fact about the pension plans is that in 1999 a CRC minister in the U.S. with thirty-nine years of service would receive only $14,290 annually. Yet his/her contributions to that same fund might have been approximately $290,000, if calculated on the basis of an average amount of $2,400 per year compounded at the rate of 5 percent, or $545,500 if compounded at the rate of 7 percent. If recent figures are used in these calculations (approximately 15 percent growth in the last five years), the amount would be considerably larger.

The Christian Schools International (CSI) plan for teachers also falls into the defined-benefit category. However, those under the CSI plan will realize more

than double the benefits of ministers from their plan. Teachers retiring at 65 under the CSI plan are estimated to receive well over $30,000 in annual retirement income. A teacher with twenty-three years of service already has a retirement benefit of just over $20,000 annually. This higher rate of return on investment also appears to be the case for the employees of the CRC who are on a different kind of plan. Why the discrepancy?

II. Consideration of the facts

A. The formula used to determine the pension for pastors is not based upon pastors' entire salary package, which inclues salary plus parsonage and utilities. Even though Social Security demands payment by pastors on the fair rental value of the parsonage, the pension-plan formula does not include the value of their housing accommodations as part of pastors' lifetime compensation. In the past the formula was based on the average salary of all pastors during the year of a particular pastor's retirement, multiplied by 1.1 percent, multiplied by the number of years of pensionable service. This year the payout will be based on the average salary of $33,312. This figure excludes parsonage and utilities. New recommendations from the pension trustees, expected at Synod 1999, will include changing the 1.1 percent factor. However, given the amount of its investments, the fund could pay out at a greater rate than is being recommended and still remain fiscally sound. It could consider offering participants the option of a defined-contribution plan or an element of it, all of which the trustees have promised to research. But if past performance is any predictor, a 1996 request by Classis Illiana to the pension trustees to investigate this matter was turned down as not feasible, according to the *Agenda for Synod 1997.*

B. The amount of pension at the time of retirement is fixed and not normally subject to annual adjustments. Even though a small inflation figure may be factored in occasionally, the fact remains that there are some long-retired pastors who are receiving less than $10,000 annually and widows who are receiving even less.

C. No payout or benefit is given to family members or their estate if a minister and his wife happen to be killed in an accident. All monies contributed through the years disappear into the fund.

D. Surviving widows of ministers receive 80 percent of the benefits awarded to the pastor when he was alive. The recommendation of the pension trustees is to reduce these benefits even more. It is a fact that many wives of pastors serve as partners in ministry and do not, for this reason, seek employment elsewhere. Thus, they never have the opportunity to build up any Social Security benefits of their own and must rely upon those built up by the husband. It happens occasionally that, when a pastor dies, the widow's only income is that from the pension funds because she is not entitled to any benefits from Social Security until she reaches the age of 62. Shouldn't this possibility be taken into account in calculations of the benefits?

E. No reports are ever given to the pension funds' participants regarding the health of the funds or what benefits have been accrued individually. Pastors have been left in the dark.

F. The ministers' pension plans appear to be robust. The 1997 figure, U.S.A. and Canada combined, reported in the *Agenda for Synod 1998,* is $100 million. That amount should be even higher today, with the U.S.A. portion amounting to $91 million. In 1997 this fund realized an investment income of over $10 million; an additional $2 million came from church contributions. The fund paid out $5 million, leaving $7 million to be reinvested in the fund.

III. Action taken by classis

Classis Illiana has appointed a study committee to review the CRC ministers' pension plans, with the following mandate:

A. Gather data, documents of the plans, and financial statements pertaining to the operation of the funds.

B. Do a comparison study of various types of pension plans, such as a defined-benefit versus a defined-contribution plan.

C. Compare the plans and benefits of various denominations and other nonprofit organizations, such as Christian Schools International.

D. Seek professional actuarial and accounting counsel on various options.

E. Make the results of this study available to pastors and the churches.

F. Report to the next meeting of Classis Illiana.

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Classis Illiana
Gerald E. De Vries, stated clerk
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